# THE MAKING AND MEANING
## OF THE
# AUGSBURG CONFESSION

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The making and meaning of
the Augsburg confession

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# THE MAKING AND MEANING
OF THE
# AUGSBURG CONFESSION

*By*
*Conrad Bergendoff, Ph. D.*

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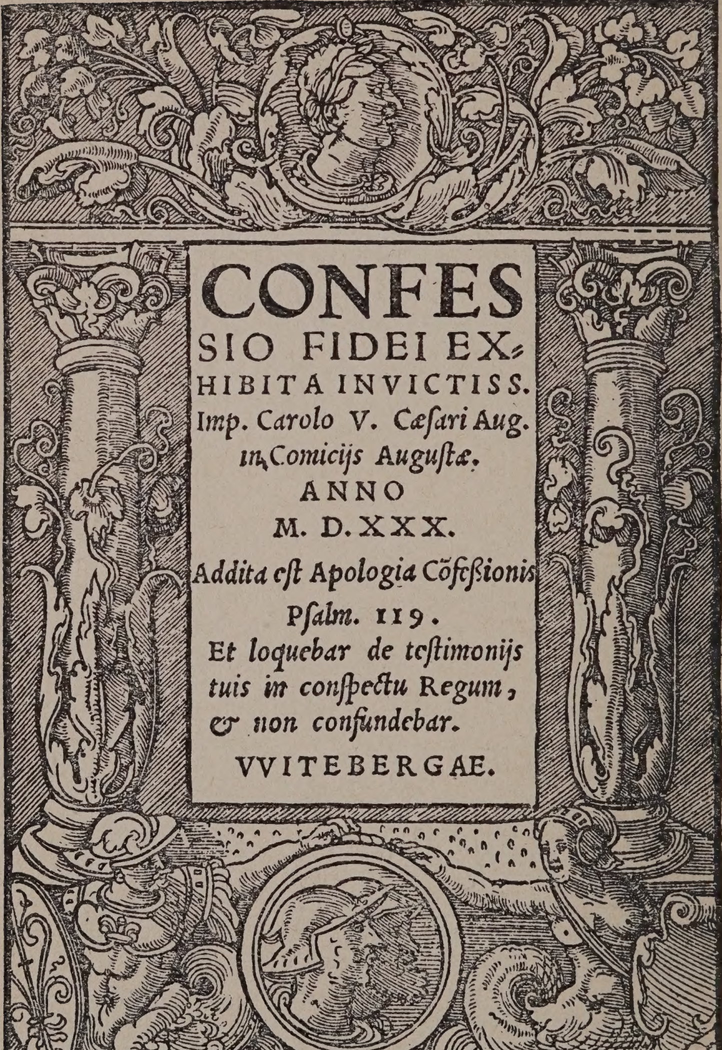
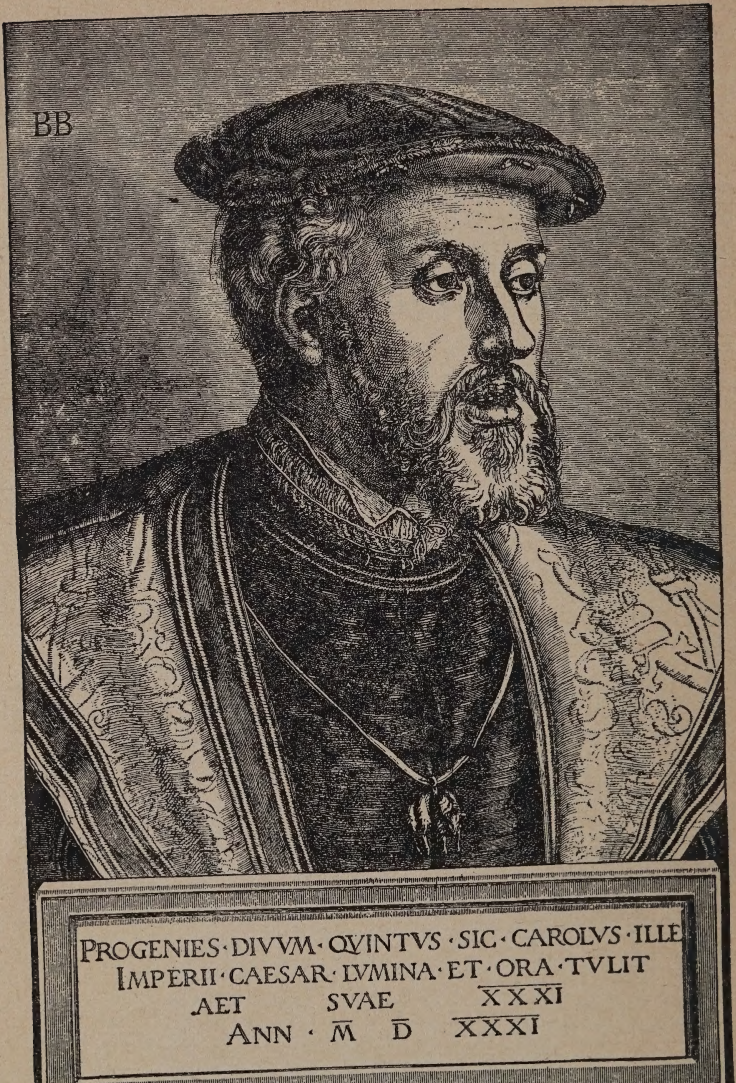


CONFES
SIO FIDEI EX-
HIBITA INVICTISS.
Imp. Carolo V. Cæſari Aug.
in Comicijs Auguſtæ.
ANNO
M. D. XXX.
Addita eſt Apologia Cõfeſsionis
Pſalm. 119.
Et loquebar de teſtimonijs
tuis in conſpectu Regum,
& non confundebar.
VVITEBERGAE.

TITLE-PAGE FROM THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION
PRINTED IN LATIN IN 1531

# The Making of the Confession


BB
PROGENIES·DIVVM·QVINTVS·SIC·CAROLVS·ILLE
IMPERII·CAESAR·LVMINA·ET·ORA·TVLIT
AET SVAE XXXI
ANN · M D XXXI

EMPEROR CHARLES V
From an engraving by Bartel Beham, 1531

"TORGAU, MARCH 14, 1530.

We graciously desire to inform you that we have received from His Imperial Majesty, our most gracious Lord, the summons to a diet, in which we, together with the other estates of the Holy Empire, are summoned to Augsburg to a diet on the 8th day of April next, where it is said that His Imperial Majesty intends to be present in person. The contents of the said summons we send you in the enclosed copy."

So ran the opening words of a letter that came in the middle of March, 1530, to Wittenberg, addressed to Dr. Martin Luther, Dr. Justus Jonas, and Master Philip Melanchthon. It was sent by their prince, the Duke of Saxony, who, because he was one of seven men who had the right to elect the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, bore the title of Elector. He was writing from his castle in Torgau, and in the course of the letter he commands "Dr. Luther, Dr. Jonas, and Master Philip Melanchthon, that you will arrange your affairs at home and also make provision in our university at Wittenberg, so far as that is possible, for the holding of lectures in your absence, so that on a day which we shall name you will be with us again at Torgau and travel with us, along with Masters Spalatin and Agricola, so far as Coburg." From there the elector meant to go on to Augsburg, and if it were allowed by the emperor, he would have these men accompany him.

Otherwise they would have to stay at Coburg. Especially Luther, the elector thought, might have to remain there.

Enclosed with the letter was a copy of the emperor's summons. Among other things it declared, "Because of the duty you owe to us and to the empire we command you to appear in person at Augsburg on that day, together with the other princes and estates,...that we may take up the matter of deliverance from the Turk; further, how, because of error and division, it may be possible to deal and determine in respect to the holy faith and the Christian religion.

"And in order that this may occur in a more wholesome way, we desire to settle the differences, abandon obstinacy, give over past erroneousness into the hand of our Redeemer, and use diligence to listen to, understand, and weigh every expression, opinion, and view in love and graciousness among ourselves, to compare and to bring them to a single Christian truth, and to do away with everything that has not been explained or transacted right on both sides, that we all may hold one single and true religion, and, as we all are and do battle under one Christ, we may thus all live in one Commonwealth, one Church, and one unity....

"Given on the first and twentieth day of January.

CAROL."

Emperor Charles V was thus summoning the princes and the representatives of the cities of Germany to a congress, or Diet, in the ancient city of Augsburg, for the 8th of April. He was in Italy at this time, but he hoped shortly to proceed across the Alps and meet the German estates on the appointed day. Two large problems were confronting him and he wanted the coming Diet to settle them. Over to the east, Solyman II, Sultan of the wild Turkish armies, was threatening Vienna. Charles needed German help to defend the imperial lands in Hungary and ward off the peril of an invasion of the Turks. The second problem was the strife in Germany over a new preaching and the rebellion of many teachers and rulers from the power of the pope. This condition must be settled and Charles intended to have it done at Augsburg.

The emperor knew something about the man who had started the religious trouble. Nine years before, he had seen and heard him at the Diet of the German princes and estates at Worms. He had heard the monk whose name was Luther claim that he could not take back what he had been teaching concerning the errors and sins of the Roman Church. Charles and the Diet had condemned him, and had hoped that would be the end of the disturbance. But Luther's prince was powerful, and Luther had many friends among the German rulers who were not friendly to the pope or the emperor. So Luther was protected and had gone on teaching by spoken and written word these many years. It irritated Charles, for this man and his little group were opposing themselves to the mightiest ruler of all Christendom. Was not Charles master of half the earth? He was king of Spain and all its newly discovered possessions in the Western Hemisphere. He reigned over the Netherlands, Austria, and parts of Switzerland. He had claims in Italy and in France. Over German territories he was emperor. Yet this Wittenberg preacher defied his power and command. Had not the possession of so many kingdoms brought with it many enemies, Charles might have set to work immediately to silence Luther. But he had wars with France and the Turk and the pope to hinder him. In 1529, however, he had vanquished his foes. The French had been defeated in battle, the pope besieged in his own Roman castle. The latter was won to friendship, and in 1529, at Bologna, he crowned Charles as Holy Roman Emperor. Now there remained but the Turks and the Lutherans to subdue; pope and emperor were one in the desire that both these foes be dealt with in summary fashion.

During the years since the Diet of Worms Lutheran teachings had spread far and wide. All of northern Germany was opposed to Rome. Sweden and Denmark were forever lost to the papacy. Southern Germany also was influenced by the Reformation, though Zwingli and Calvin, rather than Luther, were the guiding spirits here and in Switzerland. So powerful were the Lutheran princes by 1526 that at the Diet of Spires they had secured the right to control the religion of their territories. But by 1529 the victories of Charles were taking effect, and in the Second Diet of Spires the Lutherans were told that the Edict of Worms must be enforced and the old faith nowhere suppressed. Here it was that the protest was made which earned for the evangelical party the name of Protestants. It was apparent that clouds were gathering, and it was predicted that before long the Roman Church would again be supreme. Some there were who could see no other means of maintaining their faith than by the sword, or at least, by alliances for self-defense.

Such an one was Philip, the Landgrave of Hesse. Tirelessly he labored to bring together the Lutheran princes and those that followed Zwingli in the interpretation of the Lord's Supper. In October, 1529, he arranged a conference of theologians at his castle, at Marburg, between Luther and Melanchthon, Zwingli and Oecolampadius. The desired agreement could not be reached, for Luther would not depart from the Word of God. Articles of agreement and disagreement, however, were drawn up, as a result of this conference. They have been called the Marburg Articles. To make the Lutheran position still clearer, in case a federation could be effected between the northern and southern groups, Luther worked over the Marburg Articles for a conference of rulers at Schwabach. But not even there did Philip attain his purpose. From the clear statements of the Schwabach Articles the Lutherans would not depart, and the Zwinglians would not assent to them. The Protestants remained divided in the face of a dark future.

Now the emperor was on his way to Germany and had called together its rulers to meet him at Augsburg. The Protestants suspected that it would be a fateful assemblage. Elector John at his castle in Torgau began immediately to make preparations. We turn again to the letter he dispatched to the Wittenberg theologians. "Since, then, among the weightiest matters that are to be discussed at this diet, one is that of 'the division in our Christian religion'—therefore we consider that great and inevitable necessity requires—since this diet will take the place of a national council—that all the articles because of which the said division continues—shall be put in form before the diet begins," etc. Further on we read, "No one can better or more fully consider them or give advice about them than you." The elector required that they put aside all other things and prepare a statement concerning the faith and practices of the purified Church and bring this to him at Torgau by March 20.

At Wittenberg, Melanchthon, Jonas, and Bugenhagen at once set to work with Luther on the proposed document. They confined themselves to the abuses in the Roman Church which they opposed, such as, private mass, the celibacy of the clergy, the temporal power of bishops, confession of particular sins, etc. They seem not to have been ready by the stated time, for Luther and Melanchthon did not reach Torgau before the last days of March. They presented their work to the elector, and from the name of the place the statement has been called the Torgau Articles. With these and the Schwabach Articles the elector was in some measure prepared for what might be demanded at Augsburg. He had received information that the emperor would not reach Augsburg by April 8, and so delayed his own departure. On April 3, Melanchthon, Luther, and Jonas left Wittenberg and accompanied the elector as far as the boundary town of Coburg. Luther was under the ban of the empire since 1521 and could naturally get no safe-conduct, or pass, outside of the territories of the prince who protected him. So the elector left him at the fortress of Coburg, where only the music of the birds and the comfort of the Word of God could allay the anxiety he felt for the coming days at Augsburg. The rest of the party went on, and reached their destination on May 2.

Crossing the Alps, the emperor tarried at Innsbrück. It was not long before he revealed the spirit in which he had come to conciliate the Germans and reunite the Church. When first the call came for a diet, Luther and Melanchthon had hopes of safety and success. Luther thought well of Charles, admiring especially his silence. "He says less in one year than I do in one day," he said of the emperor. But Luther feared the influence of the imperial councilors, of Ferdinand, the brother of Charles, and of the "bee-swarm" of papal representatives around the throne. The emperor's high chancellor, Mercurinus Gattinara, was an exception, for he was known to be friendly to the Reformers and counseled moderation. But when the emperor reached Innsbrück the foes of the evangelical party surrounded him. Duke George of Saxony and the Bavarian dukes went to meet him, and their influence boded no good for the Protestants. At Innsbrück, also, was Christian II, the deposed king of Denmark, the brother-in-law of Charles, who now returned to the Roman Church. At this place and time, too, John Eck published a book slandering the Lutherans. The Bavarian dukes had commanded the theological faculty at Ingolstadt to collect the errors and heresies of Luther, preparatory to the Diet. This Eck had done, and the result was, *"404 Theses; some pertaining to the disputations at Leipzig, Baden, and Bern, others drawn from the writings of those disturbing the peace of the church."* Every conceivable statement and misstatement was herein included as a wholesale condemnation of the teachings of Luther and other "heretics." And when news reached Innsbrück that Protestant preachers were making trouble in Augsburg, the emperor forbade their preaching. The dawn of hope for an amicable and fair discussion of religious differences at the Diet was turning slowly into a day of doubt and despair for the evangelical party. Hoping in some measure to convey to the emperor the non-heretical nature of his own faith, the elector had sent Charles a copy of the Schwabach Articles as his personal confession, but it had no other effect on Charles than to hasten him on to the conclusion that the religious differences must be terminated.

While the emperor thus was keeping court at Innsbrück and hearing every manner of evil report against the Protestants, the elector and his party waited at Augsburg. The members of it were not idle. Melanchthon had been writing a long Introduction to the Articles as presented at Torgau. And when the bitter attack of Eck was published, it became clear that it would not be enough to tell the emperor what abuses in the Church Luther and his followers opposed. Nothing less would suffice than a statement of what the Lutherans believed. The emperor would have to be convinced that they were not heretics, least of all such as the Spaniards pictured them—atheistic and irreligious. An attempt would have to be made to show that the Reformers were true to the faith of the Church of Christ, truer in fact than the Romanists who had departed from that faith. To this task Melanchthon committed himself, and by the 11th of May had a copy of the proposed articles ready for Luther. In his letter to Luther, Melanchthon wrote, "Our Apology is being sent you, but in truth it is rather a Confession.—I have said that which I believed most useful or proper. On this ground I have succinctly given nearly all the Articles of Faith, since Eck has circulated the most satanic slanders against us. Over against these, I wished to oppose a remedy." Melanchthon's Confession was a defense of the elector of Saxony, seeking to prove that he had not sanctioned heretical teachings in his territory, but had given his protection to the teaching of the Word of God and the practices of the early Christian Church. Of this work of Philip, Luther wrote to the elector, "I have read the Apology of M. Philip. It pleases me right well, and I do not know what to improve or change in it; neither would it be proper, for I cannot tread so gently and quietly. Christ our Lord help that it bear much fruit and great fruit, as we hope and pray."

Meanwhile the Protestants were gathering in Augsburg. When the leading Catholic princes went to Innsbrück to greet the emperor, the Saxon elector also offered to come and meet him. His offer, however, found no response at the imperial court. So he continued to wait until the delay grew wearisome, and disquieting news made him think of returning home. Then the emperor bade him welcome, and soon set out for Augsburg. The elector was not alone in his defense of Luther and the Protestants, though up to the present he had chosen to pursue an independent policy. Landgrave Philip rode into Augsburg at the head of about one hundred horsemen on May 12, revealing that force was not foreign to his plans for the future. Philip wanted, and had long wanted, a federation of the Protestants to counterbalance the threats of their foes. He did not expect much of the Diet, and was opposed to having the Diet settle the religious question, for he suspected it would not act favorably to the Protestants. In Augsburg he continued to work on his favorite plan to unite the princes of southern Germany with those of the northern territories in a common stand at the Diet. But the elector of Saxony was content with Melanchthon's work, which, as we have seen, was a defense of the Saxon prince before the emperor. The other Lutherans came without any policy other than the thought that they might be permitted to act together with the elector. Margrave George of Brandenburg had gathered opinions from his theologians, but had no final statement to contribute. The representatives of Nuremberg came with an "Opinion," but they, as well as the remaining Protestants, looked to Saxony for leadership. So, until the approach of Charles, the Protestants remained divided, uncertain, fearful. The counsels of the natural born leader among them, Philip, were opposed by the counsels of the elector, whose power and prestige made him the decisive member of the group. The rest waited, wondering what course the future would open to them.

Finally on June 15 the emperor reached the city of Augsburg. He came in a manner befitting his position, that of the mightiest monarch of Christendom, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. At the bridge that spanned the Lech River, below the fortresses of the city, the elector, who was kinsman to Charles, and Marshal of the Empire, met his sovereign. Words of welcome were spoken by the archbishop of Mainz. The Papal Legate Campeggius, with the Cardinal-archbishop of Salzburg on the one hand and the Cardinal-archbishop of Trent on the other, blessed the assembly, which contained Spaniards, Italians, Netherlanders, and Germans. The procession moved on into the city, soldiers and princes in advance, and high dignitaries of the empire and the Church following. They were met at the cathedral by the bishop of Augsburg, who presided at the ceremonies here. It was late night before the emperor reached his quarters at the bishop's palace, his festive entry completed.

But the day's work was not completed. He had summoned to his apartment the leading Protestant princes, the elector, the Margrave George, the Landgrave Philip, the Prince of Anhalt, and the Duke of Lüneburg. Through his interpreter, his brother, King Ferdinand, Charles demanded again that Protestant preaching in Augsburg cease during the Diet. It was a critical moment. Hitherto there had been no unity in the action of the Protestants. Now they were forced to act as one. Up to this time they had hoped for an impartial consideration of their cause at the Diet. Here, before it opened, their case was prejudged. Would they accede to the imperial request? No! "The conscience of His Imperial Majesty," said Philip, after the margrave had defended Protestant preaching, "is not the lord and ruler of our conscience." And once more Margrave George spoke, "Before I could deny my God and His Gospel, I would kneel down here at Your Majesty's feet and have my head struck off." The emperor persisted in his demand, the princes, in their refusal. Equally persistent were they in their refusal to the demand of the emperor that they accompany him in the procession of the sacrament on June 16, which was Corpus Christi Day (the Day of the Body of the Lord). They had come, they said, to have abuses remedied at the Diet, not repeated. It was an inauspicious beginning of a conference intended to create religious harmony and peace. The Protestants did not march in the procession. The preaching did cease, but only after the preaching of the Romanists also had been silenced by the emperor. Both sides were to await the outcome of the Diet.

The Diet opened formally and with pomp on Monday, June 20. After services in the cathedral, the estates convened in the town hall. Six electors, forty-two princes, delegates from cities, bishops and ambassadors gathered here, with the emperor seated on a golden throne. In the speech from the throne, read by the Count Palatine, the assembly was informed that it was the hope of the emperor that at this Diet religious concord might be established. The Protestants, however, had already felt the trend of things. They missed the conciliatory spirit of Gattinara, for this friendly chancellor had died at Innsbrück. Before a diet unfriendly from the start the Protestants must plead their cause unaided.

Since the arrival of the emperor they had been busy. The elector of Saxony saw that he could no longer defend his cause alone. The time for united action had come. The document prepared by Melanchthon, however, referred only to preaching and practices in Saxony. It had to be revised so as to apply to all the evangelical territories. The margrave of Brandenburg and the representatives of Nuremberg were first admitted to the counsels of the elector. Landgrave Philip was not yet satisfied.

He held out the hope that the southern German Protestants also might be taken into the alliance. But Melanchthon and the elector were opposed. They would not alter the Confession, and the Zwinglians would not submit to the Lutheran doctrines of the Lord's Supper. Philip had to enter the alliance without the Zwinglians. He did gain something of importance, however. From the start he had been opposed to the Diet becoming the court of last resort, so that its decision should be final. He succeeded in writing into the Confession an appeal to a Church Council for its vindication. Neither the emperor nor the Diet could determine the faith of the Church. The emperor himself and previous diets had called for such a council. While defending their faith, the Lutherans continued to ask for the convening of a body able and willing to adjudge the matters in dispute. This demand was made in the new Introduction to the Confession. For Melanchthon's lenghty Introduction in defense of the elector had been found unsuitable, and Dr. Greg. Brück, chancellor at the Saxon court, wrote another Introduction, in the name and on behalf of all the signatories. By June 21 the Confession was assuming the form in which it might be presented to the emperor.

Strangely enough there was one man, none other than Melanchthon, who had entertained for a while the hope that the Confession might not have to be presented. The threatening attitude of the emperor awakened within him a desire to reach an amicable agreement by other methods. He put himself into communication with a couple of the secretaries of the emperor, and at first saw some gleam of hope in the replies of Alphonso Valdes, the Spanish secretary. Through Valdes, Melanchthon informed Charles that the Lutheran differences were not so many nor so great that they might not be met by sympathetic imperial and church authorities. But when the emperor asked Melanchthon for an authoritative statement, sanctioned by the princes, and Melanchthon laid the proposition before them, this course of action was frustrated. The Lutherans would not leave their cause to the mercies of diplomacy. They were at Augsburg to make known, not to conceal their faith. Now they were agreed that the emperor could not be made judge of religious questions, and that they would appeal to a Council of the Church. For the present they would unite in a common confession of what they believed and a defense of the changes that had been made in the churches of their territories. For this purpose Melanchthon's work was adopted, with a few changes, such as he himself continued to the last to make in the language of the articles. As an introduction, Chancellor Brück's statement was to be used. By June 23 the Confession was ready. It was signed, not by the theologians, but by the princes and the representatives of the cities. The emperor had called for its reading on the following day.

The Diet convened late on Friday the 24, and the emperor was inclined to have the Protestants hand over their document to him. But they insisted on reading it. They had been accused publicly; they wanted a public defense accorded them. The emperor yielded to the extent of postponing the matter to the following afternoon, when they were told to present their document in his residence, at a private session of the Diet.

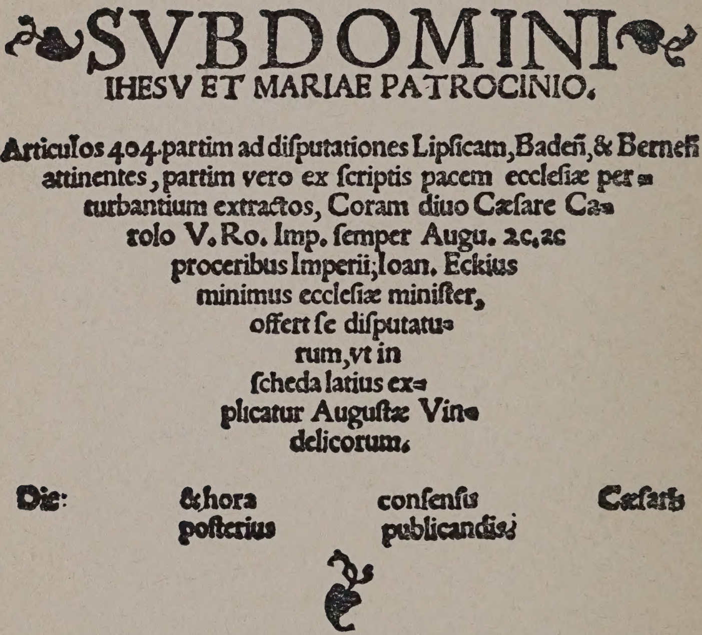
In the chapter room of the bishop's palace, about 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, June 25, the Lutherans and the emperor again faced each other. The chapel was small, but it opened on a court, and the court was filled with an eager throng. The two Saxon chancellors came forward, Dr. Greg. Brück with the Latin, Dr. Chr. Beyer with the German copy of the Confession. Charles understood little German, and preferred to have the Latin statement read. Elector John, however, asked that the German copy might be read, since the Diet was being held on German soil. The request was granted. In tones so loud and clear that those outside could hear, Dr. Beyer read his copy, reading for almost two hours. When he had finished, the two copies were presented to the emperor, who kept the Latin copy and gave the German to the imperial chancellor, the elector of Maintz. Publication of the Confession was prohibited by the emperor.

Thus was proclaimed before Charles V the faith that had been condemned at Worms, but now was defended by strong rulers and many peoples. Luther, when at Coburg he heard of the event, saw fulfilled the words of the 118th Psalm: "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings." The Augsburg Confession had been given to the world, the first and the most important of creedal statements since the days of the great ecumenical creeds of Nicaea and of Athanasius.

The Confession is divided into two parts. Part I consists of the XXI Articles which prove that the preaching of the Lutherans is consistent with Holy

Scripture and with the ancient teaching of the Church, so that "they judge harshly who insist that our teachers be regarded as heretics." These articles throughout make plain that the evangelical churches have not broken with universal Christian doctrines, but in common with the ancient Church condemn all teachings not in accord with the Word of God. They clearly differentiate between the Lutheran teaching and that of the Anabaptists, since Eck had wanted to confuse the two. The second part of the Confession, Articles XXII–XXVIII, has to do with those abuses in the Roman Church which the Lutherans had opposed, because these abuses "have crept into the Church without rightful authority."

Luther admitted that he could not "tread so softly and gently" as Melanchthon had done in writing the Confession. Yet he approved of the Confession and thanked God for it. As we shall see from a study of its contents, the Confession is throughout the teaching of Luther, though the form is Melanchthon's. Its pacific and conciliatory tone we will more readily understand if we remember that Melanchthon and the signers of the Confession still nourished the hope that the emperor would treat them justly and seek to reform those abuses in the Church which had led to the Reformation. We recall the original intention of the Reformers simply to present what became the second part of the Confession, that on abuses. The fierce treatise of Eck caused a change of policy, for now the evangelical party was compelled to show what it believed as well as what it opposed. Thus the statement became a Confession of Faith, and circumstances made it a confession not only of Luther's prince, Elector John of Saxony, but of all the Lutheran princes and territories. More than that, it has become the Confession of the whole Lutheran Church these past four hundred years. The Diet of Augsburg ended in failure, as far as its purpose had been a reconciliation of Romanists and Protestants. But out of the Diet had come one of the documents of world history, the *Confessio Augustana,* the creedal constitution of the Church of the Lutheran Reformation.



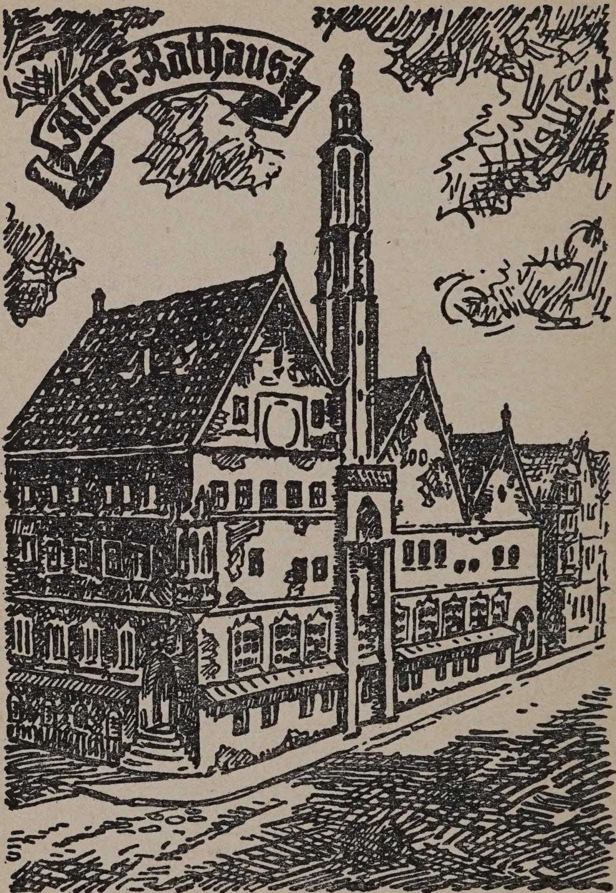
SVB DOMINI
IHESV ET MARIAE PATROCINIO.

Articulos 404 partim ad diſputationes Lipſicam, Badeñ, & Berneñ
attinentes, partim vero ex ſcriptis pacem eccleſiæ per-
turbantium extractos, Coram diuo Cæſare Ca-
rolo V. Ro. Imp. ſemper Augu. ꝛc. ac
proceribus Imperii; Ioan. Eckius
minimus eccleſiæ miniſter,
offert ſe diſputatu-
rum, vt in
ſcheda latius ex-
plicatur Auguſtæ Vin-
delicorum.

Die: &hora conſenſu Cæſaris
poſterius publicandis.

TITLE-PAGE OF ECK'S 404 THESES CIRCULATED AT AUGSBURG, TO WHICH THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION IS IN PART A REPLY

# The Meaning of the Confession


Altes Rathaus

THE OLD TOWN HALL OF AUGSBURG WHERE THE IMPERIAL DIET MET IN 1530

# The Augsburg Confession*

*Delivered to Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg, 1530 A.D.*

## PREFACE

Most Invincible Emperor, Cæsar Augustus, Most Clement Lord:

Inasmuch as Your Imperial Majesty has summoned a Diet of the Empire here at Augsburg to deliberate concerning measures against the Turk, that most atrocious, hereditary and ancient enemy of the Christian name and religion, in what way effectually to withstand his furor and assaults by strong and lasting military provision; and then also concerning dissensions in the matter of our holy religion and Christian Faith, that in this matter of religion the opinions and judgments of parties might be heard in each other's presence, and considered and weighed among ourselves in charity, leniency, and mutual kindness, to the end that the things in the Scriptures which on either side have been differently interpreted or misunderstood, being corrected and laid aside, these matters may be settled and brought back to one perfect truth and Christian concord, that for the future one pure and true religion may be embraced and maintained by us, that as we all serve and do battle under one Christ, so we may be able also to live in unity and concord in the one Christian Church. And inasmuch as we, the undersigned Electors and Princes, with others joined with us, have been called to the aforesaid Diet, the same as the other Electors, Princes, and Estates, in obedient compliance with the Imperial mandate we have come to Augsburg, and, what we do not mean to say as boasting, we were among the first to be here.

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* The translation given in the following pages is that of Jacobs, in *The Book of Concord*, vol. I.

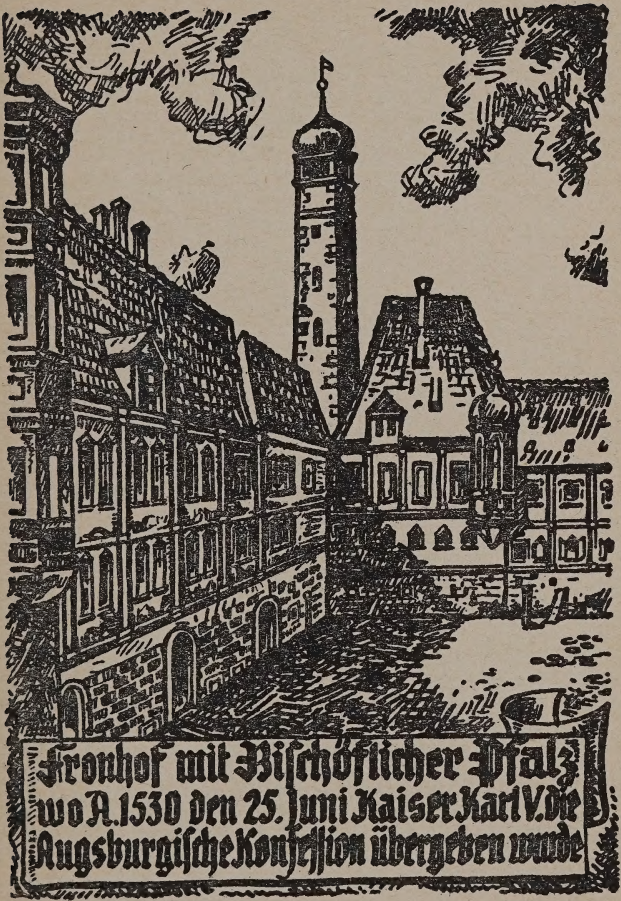
Since then Your Imperial Majesty caused to be proposed to the Electors, Princes, and other Estates of the Empire, also here at Augsburg at the very beginning of this Diet, among other things, that, by virtue of the Imperial Edict, the several Estates of the Empire should present their opinions and judgments in the German and Latin languages, after due deliberation, answer was given to Your Imperial Majesty, on the ensuing Wednesday, that on the next Friday the Articles of our Confession for our part would be presented.

Wherefore, in obedience to Your Imperial Majesty's wishes, we offer, in this matter of religion, the Confession of our preachers and of ourselves, showing what manner of doctrine from the Holy Scriptures and the pure Word of God has been up to this time set forth in our lands, dukedoms, dominions, and cities, and taught in our churches. And if the other Electors, Princes, and Estates of the Empire will present similar writings, to-wit, in Latin and German, according to the said Imperial proposition, giving their opinions in this matter of religion, here before Your Imperial Majesty, our most clement Lord, we, with the Princes and friends aforesaid, are prepared to confer amicably concerning all possible ways and means, as far as may be honorably done, that we may come together, and, the matter between us on both sides being peacefully discussed without offensive strife, the dissension, by God's help, may be done away and brought back to one true accordant religion; for as we all serve and do battle under one Christ, we ought to confess the one Christ, and so, after the tenor of Your Imperial Majesty's Edict, everything be conducted according to the truth of God, which, with most fervent prayers, we entreat of God.

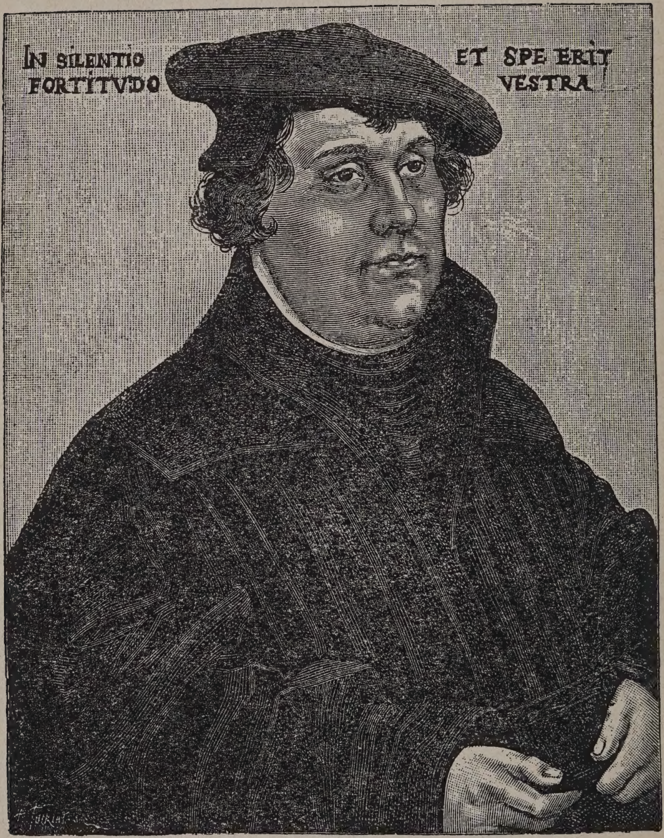
But, with regard to the other Electors, Princes, and Estates, if they hold that this treatment of the matter of religion after the manner which Your Imperial Majesty has so wisely brought forward, namely, with such mutual presentation of writings and calm conferring together among ourselves, should not proceed, or be unfruitful in results; we, at least, leave behind the clear testimony that we decline or refuse nothing whatever, allowed of God and a good conscience, which may tend to bring about Christian concord; as also Your Imperial Majesty and the other Electors and Estates of the Empire, and all who are moved by sincere love and zeal for religion, and who will give an impartial hearing to this matter, will graciously perceive and more and more understand from this our Confession.

Your Imperial Majesty also, not only once but often, graciously signified to the Electors, Princes, and Estates of the Empire, and at the Diet of Spires held 1526 A.D., according to the form of Your Imperial instruction and commission given and prescribed, caused it to be stated and publicly proclaimed, that Your Majesty, in dealing with this matter of religion, for certain reasons which were alleged in Your Majesty's name, was not willing to decide and could not determine anything, but that Your Majesty would diligently use Your Majesty's office with the Roman Pontiff for the convening of a General Council, as the same was publicly set forth at greater length over a year ago at the last Diet, which met at Spires. There Your Imperial Majesty, through His Highness Ferdinand, King of Bohemia and Hungary, our friend and clement Lord, as well as through the Orator and Imperial Commissioners, caused this, among other things, to be proclaimed: that Your Imperial Majesty had known of and pondered the resolution of Your Majesty's Representative in the Empire, and of the President and Imperial Counselors, and the Legates from other Estates convened at Ratisbon, concerning the calling of a Council, and that this also was adjudged by Your Imperial Majesty to be of advantage; and because the matters to be adjusted between Your Imperial Majesty and the Roman Pontiff were nearing agreement and Christian reconciliation, Your Imperial Majesty did not doubt that the Roman Pontiff could be induced to hold a General Council; therefore Your Imperial Majesty himself signified that he would endeavor to secure the Chief Pontiff's consent together with Your Imperial Majesty to convene such General Council, and that letters to that effect would be publicly issued with all possible expedition.

In the event, therefore, that the differences between us and the other parties in the matter of religion cannot be amicably and in charity settled here before Your Imperial Majesty, we offer this in all obedience, abundantly prepared to join issue and to defend the cause in such a general, free, Christian Council, for the convening of which there has always been accordant action and agreement of votes in all the Imperial Diets held during Your Majesty's reign, on the part of the Electors, Princes, and other Estates of the Empire. To this General Council, and at the same time to Your Imperial Majesty, we have made appeal in this greatest and gravest of matters even before this in due manner and form of law. To this appeal, both to Your Imperial Majesty and to a Council, we still adhere, neither do we intend, nor would it be possible for us, to relinquish it by this or any other document, unless the matter between us and the other side, according to the tenor of the latest Imperial citation, can be amicably and charitably settled and brought to Christian concord, of which this also is our solemn and public testimony.


Fronhof mit Biſchöflicher Pfalz
wo A.1530 den 25. Juni Kaiſer Karl V. die
Augsburgiſche Konfeſſion übergeben wurde

THE BISHOP'S PALACE WHERE THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION
WAS READ ON JUNE 25, 1530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MARTIN LUTHER

# PART I

## The Chief Articles of Faith

### ARTICLE I.

Our Churches, with common consent, do teach, that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence and concerning the Three Persons, is true and to be believed without any doubting; that is to say, there is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet that there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the term "person" they use as the Fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.

They condemn all heresies which have sprung up against this article, as the Manichaeans who assumed two principles (gods), one Good, and the other Evil; also the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and all such. They condemn also the Samosatenes, old and new, who, contending that there is but one Person, sophistically and impiously argue that the Word and the Holy Ghost are not distinct Persons, but that "Word" signifies a spoken word, and "Spirit" (Ghost) signifies motion created in things.

We baptize our children "into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." At each Sunday service we confess our faith in the Father Almighty, in Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Since the time of Paul the Church has pronounced the benediction of God in these words, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit."

Not always have all the members of the Christian Church been agreed as to the way in which the relationship of Father and Son and Holy Spirit ought to be declared. In fact, from earliest times there was dispute about the relationship of Christ to the Father and to man. Was Jesus God? Was He man? How should men think and speak of Christ and how might they express their ideas of God? These were great and important questions in the first centuries, and they are questions that still lie at the very foundation of Christian faith.

It was natural that the opponents of Luther and the Reformation would try to classify the Protestants as heretics. Eck had wanted the emperor to believe that the Lutherans were as bad as the Mohammedans in their doctrine. In this First Article, therefore, as well as throughout the whole Confession, the fact is emphasized that Luther's teachings are not heresy, but are in accordance with the true Church which from the beginning had held itself to the Word of God. With those who denied the doctrine of the Trinity in the early centuries—the Manichaeans, or the followers of Valentinius, Arius, Eunomius, Paul of Samosata—and with those who more recently were denying the Trinity of God, the Reformers had absolutely nothing to do. They not only denied any alliance with such, they expressly condemned them and their teachings.

The Lutheran Church, in agreement with this Article of the Confession, has ever taught that the

Father is God, Christ is God, the Holy Spirit is God. In common with other bodies it has translated that word in the ancient creed which expresses the independent existence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, by the term "person." But we ought not to think of "person" in its usual sense. Indeed no one can explain this threefold distinction of the One God. But every Christian must experience this truth. For at least partially he can realize that God is his Creator, that God in Christ is his Saviour, that God through the Holy Spirit works faith and sanctification in his heart. Because salvation is a divine, not a human, process, human words only feebly express the truth that the Christian lives through. The Christian confesses a Triune God because so the God of his salvation has been revealed to him. The Trinity is not mentioned in the Bible, but to those who have found the Saviour in the Word the Father has been revealed and the Spirit has been given. They who deny the Trinity are not and cannot be considered Christians.

## ARTICLE II.

Also they teach, that since the Fall of Adam, all men begotten according to nature, are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through baptism and the Holy Ghost.

They condemn the Pelagians and others, who deny that the vice of origin is sin, and who, to obscure the glory of Christ's merit and benefits, argue that man can be justified before God by his own strength and reason.

In the explanation of the Third Article of the Creed, Luther wrote, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him." His words have found an echo in the heart of every believer, for the Christian realizes that the grace to believe is a gift of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" was the proclamation of Jesus, and His teaching is the ultimate basis of the doctrine of original sin.

"Without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence"—thus the Confession characterized the state of the human heart as it is by nature. Melanchthon later, in the Apology, defined man's natural state as one of "ignorance of God, contempt for God, being destitute of fear and confidence in God, inability to love God." "These," he added, "are the chief faults of human nature, conflicting especially with the first table of the Decalogue."

The "concupiscence" of which the Confession speaks is a "wicked desire" that rules the heart of man. Augustine so described man, claiming that man could not fear, love, and trust in God as he should, but instead put his love and trust in carnal things. If, therefore, we say that original sin is concupiscence, we mean that human nature prefers earthly things to the things of the kingdom of God, and is content to live and die in the things that are of this world.

The Lutheran teaching that man is born in sin is not so difficult to understand if we will recall that Scripture teaches that God created man to be righteous. Man is not as the Creator made him. From preceding generations he has inherited the condition that now is his. Instead of the "original righteusness" that belonged to him who was created in the image of God, man comes into the world without knowledge of God, and has neither fear of nor love to God. The very inability of man to know or believe in his God is counted to him as sin, for it leads him to worship false gods and is the root of all unrighteousness. By nature man is inclined to worship and serve himself, instead of God. Thereby he reveals that another law than that of God reigns in his heart.

The importance of this doctrine lies in its results. For if we believe that we are by birth as we are intended to be, then a virtuous life consists merely in seeking to develop and express the powers in one's nature. But if we believe that there is a God into whose kingdom we can enter only by receiving powers not ours by any natural means, then life's greatest purpose will become to be born again, to enter into a fellowship with God which can be developed and expressed in life here and hereafter. The following of Pelagius includes every one who thinks that in himself are sufficient powers and willingness to do what shall please the all-righteous God. It is the confession of the Lutheran Church that man is incompetent by his very nature to merit a life in the presence of God, and, further, that man's nature not only is not able to earn a spiritual perfection, but in itself merits only exclusion from the kingdom of God.

This doctrine is not a popular one with any age, least of all among those who consider themselves "modern." For it does go against the grain of human nature. It condemns that nature as in itself perverted. It makes necessary a recourse to some higher power than human wisdom and human strength. But the Lutheran Church has never sought to be popular. It has sought to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ. He first announced the truth confessed to in this article of the Confession, when He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

## ARTICLE III.

Also they teach, that the Word, that is, the Son of God, did take man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are Two Natures, the divine and the human, inseparably conjoined in one Person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but for all actual sins of men. He also descended into hell, and truly rose again the third day; afterward He ascended into Heaven, that He might sit on the right hand of the Father, and forever reign, and have dominion over all creatures, and sanctify them that believe in Him, by sending the Holy Ghost into their hearts, to rule, comfort, and quicken them, and to defend them against the devil and the power of sin. The same Christ shall openly come again to judge the quick and the dead, etc., according to the Apostles' Creed.

This article closes with a reference to the Apostles' Creed confirming what the reader may have observed as he read the article, namely, that this is to a large extent a paraphrase of the Second Article of the Creed. But it is something more than a repetition of that article. For the Creed merely states the main facts of the life and work of Jesus Christ, while this article adds the reason for these facts. "That He might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice...for all sins of men"—this was the purpose of His birth of the Virgin Mary. "That He might...forever reign...and sanctify them that believe in Him...and defend them"—for this reason He ascended into heaven.

We recall that in the Small Catechism Luther similarly interpreted the Second Article of the Creed. He wanted above all else to impress the purpose of Christ's coming to earth and return to heaven. Into the facts of the life and ministry of Christ he wove the description of the human heart and the story of redemption effected by this Divine Person. "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord; Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, bought me and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with silver and gold, but with His holy and precious blood, and with His innocent sufferings and death; in order that I might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness; even as He is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true." When Luther thought of God, he thought of himself, and of the relationship between his God and himself. His teaching about Christ was the result of his experience with Christ in His Word and in his own life.

In a Christmas sermon of 1522 Luther boldly affirmed that the true doctrine of the Person of Christ was not a matter of lip confession, but of spiritual experience. "What difference does it make that Christ is not what the heretics have preached if even to ourselves He neither is nor does more than for them? What difference does it make that with our mouth we condemn such heresy and correctly confess Christ, if nevertheless the heart affirms nothing more than they of Him?" And he goes on to claim that we need Christ hardly at all if we do not need such a Christ as the Word and Creed reveal—a Christ who is both man and God. For if we can win salvation by our own powers and deeds, then of what avail is Christ? But the kind of a person described in the Second Article of this Confession realizes that his salvation is the work of One who is more than man. He confesses his Saviour to be a Man in whom the Nature of God is incarnate. The Father did not take man's nature, nor did the Spirit, but the Father is revealed and the Spirit is sent to him who in faith has accepted the Incarnate Word.

The Lutheran Church believes that Christ is God. It believes that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." As little as it can explain the Trinity can it explain the deity of Christ. But it believes that One who has taught as He taught, lived as He lived, suffered and died as He did, lives and reigns as He does—such a Christ is what He Himself asserted when He "called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

## ARTICLE IV.

Also they teach, that men cannot be Justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, hath made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.

This is the central doctrine of the Reformation. It is also the heart of the Christian religion. For the chief concern of man is to be found in his right relationship to God. When the soul is in communion with God it has peace and joy and eternal life. When the soul is outside of the fellowship of God it is in darkness, despair, and death.

But how can we enter into communion with God, when the natural state of the human heart is one of "ignorance of God, contempt for God, being destitute of fear and confidence in God, inability to love God" (Cf. Article II)? The theologians of the Roman Church had taught that man could do a number of things which were good, and God would reward man with salvation. But Luther had experienced the falseness of this claim, and found that nothing man could do would give to the sincere seeker the peace and joy that he needed. In the theology of the Roman Church he could not find the truth. He did find it in the New Testament, which had been neglected by the teachers of the Church.

In the New Testament Luther found Christ. The more he meditated upon Christ the more he became convinced of the errors of the Romanists. For here Luther discovered a Christ who was more than Man, He was God. And this Christ had given His life for the redemption of men. The cross of Christ stood out for Luther as the main thing in the Word. Where then, he asked, do all my works that the Church demands come in? If I can of myself do something for my salvation, if I can earn the grace of God, why Christ, why the cross, why the gospel of Christ?

The answer Luther arrived at was that the Romanists were wrong and Christ and the gospel were right. Christ came into the world just because we can do nothing of ourselves. He died on the cross for our sins because there was no other way in which God could take away sins. Because of the death of Christ the gospel can proclaim a gracious God. God had ever been gracious; His love sent Jesus Christ into the world. But the sin of man created a barrier between God and man which could be removed only by the death of Christ for the sin of man. Then God could freely offer salvation, for Christ's sake, to all mankind.

Thus man has done nothing, can do nothing to win salvation. It is a free gift of God in Jesus Christ. The forgiveness of sins is a work of God, and of God alone. Man's part in earning salvation is entirely excluded. He cannot repent, he cannot believe, he cannot do good works, so as to win the grace of God. That God gives to him without his merit, without worthiness in him, without his having raised a finger to earn it. The offer of grace on God's part is, for Christ's sake, free to all who will accept.

To accept is indeed all that man can do. Faith is man's acceptance of the gift of God. And what do we accept? Not, as the Romanists teach, an invisible something that is called grace, which makes us worthy to be saved. Grace is not a *thing* at all. Grace is the attitude of God toward us, for Christ's sake. Because of what Christ did, God is gracious to us, that is, He forgives us all our sins and creates in us a new heart and a new life. Our faith is our acceptance of such a God and His work. You are made righteous before God, said Luther, not by your faith, "but by the Guest whom through faith you have received into your heart." So faith becomes our reception of the Christ into our hearts. And when we have Him, we have the forgiveness of sins for which purpose He came.

When we have received Christ as our Saviour, we are judged, not by what we are, but by what we have. That is, God who sees and knows our sins and weaknesses does not judge us guilty of the violations of His Law, which we have not kept. He sees rather that we have accepted His Son on the cross as a punishment for our sins, and that we thus acknowledge our sin and need of a Saviour. And seeing Christ in us through faith, God reckons the death of Christ as the punishment of our sin, and considers us righteous because we possess Christ. Thus, for the sake of and through Christ we have these gifts—a gracious God, the forgiveness of sins, the righteousness of a new life in Christ.

The Lutheran teaching claims to be nothing more nor less than the teaching of the Word. In Romans, chapters 3 and 4, we have the identical teaching that is presented in this Article of the Confession. Thus we read in 3. 21–24, "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

It is sometimes remarked that the central article of the Augsburg Confession is one of the briefest in the entire Confession. But the key to a great door can be very small in proportion to the size of the door. So this paragraph is the key to the door that opens into the glorious mansions of Scripture. Through the doctrine of justification the believer enters into the inheritance of the kingdom of Christ. For it answers the all-important question, "What must I do to be saved?"

## ARTICLE V.

That we may obtain this faith, the Office of Teaching the gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the Sacraments as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who worketh faith where and when it pleaseth God in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justified those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ's sake.

They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost cometh to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.

In the explanation of the Third Article of the Creed Luther confessed, "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel." The way to faith lay through the Word of God. This conviction of Luther became an article of faith in the Lutheran Church, which has ever testified that the Spirit of God works through definite means of grace.

God is not bound to any method of work among men, but man is bound by the method which God chooses to follow in working his salvation. "It was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1. 21). In the preaching of the gospel with its Word and Sacrament God has revealed Christ and the salvation that is in Him. Since there is "no other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4. 12), and His Name is the subject of all Christian preaching, it is clear that salvation is inseparably bound up with the proclamation of the gospel. For it is in them that hear the gospel that the Holy Spirit can work faith in Him who is proclaimed.

Thus the Lutheran Church is opposed to every assertion that the Spirit of God can come to man apart from the Word and the Sacraments. For these are the gospel of Christ, and if man can receive God's Spirit apart from the gospel, then Christ's mission to man was unnecessary and vain. And the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, wherefore He can be given only to those who have accepted Christ on the hearing of His gospel. All talk of spirituality or of salvation outside of God's Word is thus a despising of that means which God has chosen for His revelation—the Word. Furthermore, the testimony of every regenerate soul who has Christ is that

He came through the means of grace into his heart and life.

The office of proclaiming the gospel and administering the Sacraments belongs to the congregation of those who have heard and believed. But since good order would forbid that each one should exercise this office, the congregation has delegated the duties of this office to the ministry. In themselves the ministers of the Word have no peculiar powers or privileges. They act as the spokesmen of God, proclaiming the message which He has given to the world. They cannot give the gift of the Holy Spirit, but through the gospel which they preach the Spirit can come to those who hear and believe. The minister is not the instrument of the Spirit, but the Word that he speaks and the Sacraments he administers are the Spirit's means of reaching human hearts. Apart from this ministry man knows no way in which the gifts of God can be given to humanity.

In Word and Sacraments there is no magic power which compels the hearer or the recipient to receive the Holy Spirit. Only in those hearts where He can work faith is the work of salvation effected. The hearing of the Word and the receiving of the Sacrament do not necessarily change man. Only if by these means Christ enters into his life is the hearer received into God's favor and created anew. The function of the ministry is to present Christ, through whom men are made righteous before God.

## ARTICLE VI.

Also they teach, that this Faith is bound to bring forth Good Fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but not that we should rely on those works to merit justification before God. For remission of sins and justification are apprehended by faith, as also the voice of Christ attests: "When ye shall have done all these things, say: We are unprofitable servants" [Luke 17. 10]. The same is also taught by the Fathers. For Ambrose says: "It is ordained of God that he who believes in Christ, is saved; freely receiving remission of sins, without works, by faith alone."

No more stubborn resistance was offered to the Reformers by the Roman Church than in the matter of good works. For the Roman Church was built on the teaching that a man's good deeds earn for him the grace of God. By doing what he could, with the help of the Church, a man received from God rewards for his efforts and gradually became righteous, though he never knew when he had done sufficient good to please God.

This view of good works Luther held to be unscriptural and false. Man could never do works sufficiently good or enough to change his standing before God. The condition of the heart rather than the works of his hands keeps the sinner separated from God. No amount of fruit can transform the nature of the tree which produces it. A change in heart must take place before man can do good deeds.

Such a change is effected by the kind of faith of which the preceding articles of the Confession have spoken. We have noticed that the great gift that comes to the heart through faith in the Word is

Christ Himself. His coming into the will and thoughts and emotions of a man will necessarily make of the believer a new man. For the coming of Christ means the presence of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of man. Where the Spirit of Christ dwells in man there will be done the will of God. A man cannot have Christ in his heart and live the same way as he did before his acceptance of Christ. After He comes, the Christian will say, "It is not I that live, but Christ lives in me." "And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof" (Gal. 5. 24). Henceforth the deeds of such a life will be the deeds commanded by the Law of God, even though there will be found in that life an opposing force with which the Christian must do daily battle.

There will, thus, be good fruits in the life of the Christian. In fact, a Christian without good deeds is inconceivable, because that which makes him a Christian is Christ, and He is the source of all goodness. But one must be careful to distinguish between cause and effect. Christ is the cause, good works are the effect. No amount of so-called good acts can bring Christ into the heart with His grace and forgiving power. He comes to hearts which realize that there is in themselves no goodness or truth, wherefore we must believe that we are justified apart from works. We are received into God's favor solely by the merits and good deeds of Christ, whom we have accepted, whose righteousness has become our own. We possess Christ and all His gifts though these may only slowly and hardly become dominant in our life. But the good deeds that we do are done after His coming and on account of

His presence, and they are possible because He has changed our heart which is the root of all our deeds. Faith in Christ makes possible Christian deeds. Christian deeds cannot make possible faith in Christ, because there can be no Christian deeds before Christ has been born in the heart. He is born there entirely through the grace of God, apart from human righteousness, but He lives there to bring forth a divine righteousness.

## ARTICLE VII.

Also they teach, that One holy Church is to continue for ever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. As Paul says: "One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," etc. [Eph. 4. 5–6.]

Around the preaching of the gospel there grew up from earliest times various ceremonies, customs, rules, offices. These were external practices and objects which every one could see, and naturally men came to think of the Church, not so much by what it preached, as by what the ministers and laity did. When the word "church" was mentioned people thought first of the building in which the services were held and where the visible tokens of the Christians were to be found. Especially the priests drew the attention of the people, and they led the people to believe that the Church was composed of all that obeyed the rule of the highest priest—the pope at Rome. To them the Church was the Church of Rome, and all who wished salvation had to belong to the organization headed by the pope.

Luther shattered this idea of the Church. He was thankful for what he had learned in the Roman Church, but he had not found peace and truth in it. The great discovery which he made was that his salvation depended not on membership in the papal church, but on his acceptance of the Word of God, through which Christ came into his life. The Roman Church had the Bible but paid less attention to it than to its own teachings and success. Yet there were sincere men and women in that church who had the gift of grace through faith, despite the errors of their church. For true Christians are members of a body which is invisible and transcends the boundaries of any earthly organization. Luther found in the Scriptures a new ideal of the Church, and gave us a new definition of the Christian Church.

The Church has no human head. Its head is Christ who creates a new life in the heart of every one who hears His Word and accepts Him as Saviour and Lord. Such an one lives in constant fellowship with Christ, through the Spirit that is given to every disciple of Jesus Christ. Those who live in and through Christ are scattered over all the earth, but together they constitute the Church, which the Creed defines as a "communion of saints." They have "one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4. 5–6). When they confess that they believe in "One, holy Church," they think not of any local group or any human institution but of all their fellow men who have found the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

They confess their faith in "One Church." By this they mean no sect or denomination but they refer to the unity of those who are in Christ. There is only one kind of Christian unity—the unity of faith in a Christ who is One with the believer. Identity of outward forms and ceremonies, traditions and customs, organization and service, are not forms of Christian unity, though they may be desirable and profitable. But in themselves they cannot produce faith, a faith that receives Christian life, and so they are of secondary importance. Only the means of grace can bring faith and the fruits of faith, wherefore they are of prime importance and in them the unity of the Church is found.

In his Large Catechism Luther pictured this truly holy and truly universal Church in which the Christian confesses his belief in his explanation of the Third Article of the Creed. "I believe that there is upon earth an holy assembly and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, one mind and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet one in love, without sects or schisms. And I also am a part and member of the same, a participant and joint owner of all the good it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Ghost, in that I have heard and continue to hear the Word of God, which is the means of entrance.—Thus, until the last day, the Holy Ghost abides with the holy congregation or the Christian people. By means of this congregation He brings us to Christ and teaches and preaches to us the Word, whereby He works and promotes sanctification, causing [this community] daily to grow and become strong in the faith and the fruits of the Spirit, which He produces."

## ARTICLE VIII.

Although the Church properly is the Congregation of Saints and true believers, nevertheless, since, in this life, many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled therewith, it is lawful to use the Sacraments, which are administered by evil men; according to the saying of Christ: "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat," etc. [Mt. 23. 2.] Both the Sacraments and Word are effectual by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, notwithstanding they be administered by evil men.

They condemn the Donatists, and such like, who denied it to be lawful to use the ministry of evil men in the Church, and who thought the ministry of evil men to be unprofitable and of none effect.

To such a definition of the Church as is given in the preceding article some one might object and say that everything in the Church is not holy and pure, but that there is much of imperfection and unrighteousness. But this objection would refer, not to the Church, but to the congregations or organizations in which true Christians are found. For it is admitted that "many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled" with the true believers in the earthly Church. And it must be so since men cannot judge the motives of the hearts of fellow men who seek the fellowship of the Church.

Because also the individual believers are never in this life perfect, the congregation of believers is not perfect. They who have found Christ in the gospel and in faith live in Him are not completely free from evil. They have received Him who can conquer evil in their lives, but the conquest requires a lifetime. They are justified by grace, and they experience in Christ the forgiveness of sins, but the eradication of sin is a daily process until the end of life. Consequently even within the congregation of the justified there is much sin and weakness. Still the Church is holy, because it possesses Him who is holy, the Saviour, Jesus Christ. Neither the individual believer nor the Church is holy in itself. Both are holy because through Word and Sacrament the righteous Christ dwells in them through faith, and gradually through His Spirit transforms their life so that they become holy.

Even among the ministry by whom the means of grace are proffered there may be "hypocrites and evil persons." Over a thousand years before Luther's time the Church had been agitated by a dispute concerning the value of the acts performed by unworthy ministers. Augustine had contended against Donatus that the Sacraments were effectual whether the administrant were worthy or not worthy, and his teaching became the doctrine of the Church. Luther and the Lutheran Church have agreed with Augustine. For who can determine the true character of the minister, except God? And the power of the gospel is the power of God's own Holy Spirit, not the power of the human agent. If the Word be preached correctly and the Sacraments be administered as instituted by Christ, the believer is led into the grace of God regardless of the character of the man by whom the gospel is proclaimed.

The Lutheran doctrine of the Church everywhere emphasizes the all-important nature of the means of grace. The Word and the Sacraments make the Church possible, and the ministry is instituted for their sake. The Word and the Sacraments are the visible tokens of the Church, and unity in regard to them is all that is necessary for the unity of the Church. The Word and the Sacraments are the means of the operation of the Holy Spirit, wherefore the Church and the ministry are pure only in proportion to the extent of His operation in them. The Word and the Sacraments are the proclamation of Christ, the Head of the Church, and the Church is Christian only insofar as His Spirit is found therein. Because the Word and the Sacraments derive their power from Christ and not from men, they awaken and nourish faith by whomsoever they are administered.

## ARTICLE IX.

Of Baptism, they teach, that it is necessary to salvation, and that through Baptism is offered the grace of God; and that children are to be baptized, who, being offered to God through Baptism, are received into His grace.

They condemn the Anabaptists, who allow not the Baptism of children, and say that children are saved without Baptism.

The work of the Holy Spirit begins in man at Baptism, and through this means of grace the child is received into that communion of believers which constitutes the Church of Christ. In itself this Sacrament comprehends all of the promises on which the Christian life is based. Its effect depends upon the faith of the recipient, but faith or unbelief have nothing to do with the truth of the Sacrament.

The principal part of Baptism is not that which is seen—the water, but that which is heard—the Word. For the Sacrament of Baptism is a promise which contains a gift. In it the Father promises to consider the child for Christ's sake a child of Himself, a child of God. The child thus is received into the fellowship of God, and to him is given that gift which is the seal of the children of God—the Holy Spirit. In the sight of God the baptized one is considered as one of God's people, inheriting the treasures of the Father's kingdom.

As he grows older the child is led into the fuller truth of the kingdom of God. The Spirit, through the gospel, teaches him the true condition of his heart and points him to the fuller power of Christ. There is a growth in faith and a coming to conscious fellowship with the sanctifying Lord. Or, as he grows, the forces of sin may gain the upper hand and all traces of faith in Christ may vanish. He falls into deeper sin and seems lost to the Father's house. But if, by Word or Sacrament, he be led again to faith, he can claim the promise given in Baptism by the Father. He neglected or forsook the grace then promised, but the Father's Word never failed. He needed but to come back to be received again into the baptismal grace from which he had fallen. As long as life lasts that adoption by God remains valid if the child does not spurn it.

To those who object to the baptism of children, it need only be said that the command to baptize comes from God, not from man. It may be added that only a presumptuous man would deny that there is faith in children, though it be not a conscious faith. And who shall say how great a faith in an adult is necessary for his baptism? It is not man that makes Baptism. Baptism is God's promise of grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit, given to whosoever will receive. Man may reject the promise and the gift, but that does not alter the fact that in Baptism God has placed them in His heart.

The water of Baptism is symbolical. The Holy Spirit in the heart of the baptized must be permitted daily to wash away the sin of life and bring forth the new life of the child of God. Baptism is the beginning of the Christian experience—it must continue until death. The presence of the Spirit in the heart of the believer is the possibility of the putting to death of the sinful nature and the growing stronger of the life of Christ in the heart. This is the source of daily repentance, wherein the believer seeks forgiveness for sin, but more than that —seeks deliverance from sin and its power, so as to walk more completely in the righteousness of Christ.

In this view of Baptism there can be no reason for a second baptism—a baptism "by the Spirit"— as it has often been called. In infant baptism the Spirit is given and thereby the foundation is laid for all later spiritual experience. Coming to conscious faith is but the entering into the inheritance given by God in Baptism. Nor can any amount of water or mode of Baptism be of great importance. One drop of water indicates as much as a whole river the truth that lies behind the use of water—the cleansing from sin.

Baptism is more than a sign. It is a promise of God given to the individual soul. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit making possible the life of a child of God. Through no power of the one baptized, God comes with the offer of eternal grace. Through faith that offer can be appropriated, through unbelief it can be rejected. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16. 16).

## ARTICLE X.

Of the Supper of the Lord, they teach, that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord; and they disapprove of those that teach otherwise.

Two sections of Christendom taught otherwise in regard to the Lord's Supper than did Luther and his followers. Especially the Anabaptists and the followers of Zwingli came under the heading of "those who teach otherwise" and were looked upon with disapproval by the Lutherans. But also with the Romanists Luther differed in the teaching on The Lord's Supper.

We have already noticed the teaching of the Augsburg Confession concerning the way in which the Spirit of God brings the grace of God to believing hearts, namely, through the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. It was natural that the Anabaptists, who taught that the Spirit of God could come without any agency directly into human hearts, would not pay much attention to the Lord's Supper. For them it was only a sign of the death of Christ on the cross and a memorial feast in His honor. Beyond the bread and wine and the remembrance of the cross the Sacrament had no special significance.

On the other hand Luther was opposed by the Roman conception. This had grown slowly through the centuries until it had little resemblance to the idea of the Lord's Supper found in the New Testament. The priest had come to look upon the celebration of the Sacrament as a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. When he read the words of the ceremony—the mass—he enacted the offering of Christ and in Christ's stead brought the sacrifice of Christ to the throne of God as a means of receiving the favor of God. The more masses that were said, the greater was the merit earned from God. The words of institution pronounced by the priest caused the bread to be changed into the body of Christ and the wine to be changed into the blood of Christ. Thus He was present in the elements, and before Christ in the Eucharist all should bow in adoration. So holy was the blood that only the priest might partake of the wine. The receiving of the body was an act for which the layman should prepare himself by confession, fasting, penance, prayer, so that he might make himself worthy of this great gift.

To Luther every doctrine must be determined by the teaching of the Word of God. Here he found nothing about the change of substance, or transubstantiation, and so declared that this Roman doctrine was false and unscriptural. Bread remains bread and wine remains wine in the Sacrament. And assuredly the Word knows nothing of a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ, least of all a sacrifice performed by priests at an altar. His death on Calvary was once and for all time, and needed no priestly repetition in order to effect the forgiveness of sins. Luther denied the truth of the doctrine of the mass. In place of a sacrifice he spoke of a sacrament, a gift of God to us instead of a work of ours presented to God.

But one truth he found in the Romanist teaching which he did not find in the teaching of the Anabaptists—the fact of a mystery in the Sacrament. It was more than a sign, more than a memorial. Its central fact was the Word of Christ, not the bread nor the wine. That Word said that Christ had affirmed, "This is my body" and "This is my blood." How this could be, man could not understand. But the believer will trust Christ more than his understanding, and for the Christian there is nothing else to do than to accept His Word that His body and blood are present in this Sacrament. "We see with the eyes bread," he wrote, "but with the ears we hear that the body is there." *How* to explain this miracle was as difficult as the ways of God are difficult to man's comprehension. But he was certain that the way to explain was not, as the Anabaptists did, to explain away the mystery. Nor would he, as the Romanists, invent fanciful theories. The Christian does not understand the incarnation —he believes it and experiences it. Similarly, he does not understand the Sacrament—he believes it because the Word has proclaimed it and because he has experienced that in the Lord's Supper he has received more than bread and wine.

The Lord's Supper gives Christ Himself, through whom are forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. But just as Christ was present after the incarnation among men but was accepted only by those who believed in Him, while His rejection by the unbelievers became their condemnation, so in the Lord's Supper He is received only by those who have faith, while to the others He is received unto judgment. In the Large Catechism Luther wrote, "That which is given in and with it (the Sacrament) cannot be seized and appropriated by the body. But this is done by the faith of the heart, which discerns this treasure and desires it." And the Small Catechism contains these familiar words, "He is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words, 'Given and shed for you, for the remission of sins.'—He who believes these words has that which they declare and set forth."

## ARTICLE XI.

Of Confession, they teach, that Private Absolution ought to be retained in the churches, although in confession an enumeration of all sins is not necessary. For it is impossible, according to the Psalm: "Who can understand his errors?" [Ps. 19. 12.]

Since centuries back confession and absolution had been regarded as sacramental in nature, and the laity had been instructed to confess especially as a preparation for the Lord's Supper. Easter time was the season above all others in which the Christian should confess his sins to his parish priest and do the works necessary for the obtaining of absolution from his sins. He ought then, and whenever he confessed, to enumerate his sins and describe the circumstances leading to these trespasses. By virtue of his office in the Church the priest could declare the sinner forgiven, when he had fulfilled what the priest demanded as penance for his sins.

Such a system made of the Church a court and of the priest a judge. The parishioner would confess his sins and the priest would determine the penalty and how it should be met. The punishment corresponded to the degree of sinfulness. Penalties might be exchanged for others, and in the days of indulgence sellers they might be avoided by money payments. Confession became the powerful means of exercising church discipline, and absolution from sins was earned by the works of the penitent. The sins on which the penalties were based were not only such sins as the Scriptures knew, but also such as were trespasses against the civil authority over which the Roman Church claimed superiority.

To Luther this idea of the Church was intolerable. We have already seen how differently he defined the Church—not a judicial system with legal powers, but a fellowship in Jesus Christ. The true mission of the Church, so the Lutheran Church teaches, is to preach the gospel that through it men may come to faith and in faith receive the gift of God's salvation in Christ. The ministry has no powers that do not belong to every believer. In themselves the ministers have no special privileges, their duties are such as the congregation entrusts to them. They can bind no one to do penance for secular trespasses, and in spiritual matters they have no other power of absolution than belongs to each true Christian. For any one may confess his sins to a fellow Christian and from him, in Christ's name, receive the assurance of forgiveness. Christ speaks through such a lay confessor as well as through a priest confessor, and to the confessing, penitent sinner declares forgiveness.

Moreover, the forgiveness of sins is not based upon any *satisfactions* that the contrite sinner may render. Thus the whole system of penalties on which priestly absolution was built up fell to the ground. Christ forgives the sins of every one who believes in Him, not because of any merit or worthiness in the sinner, but entirely out of grace. Therefore when a Christian confesses to a fellow Christian as if to Christ Himself, the fellow Christian, in Christ's name, can absolve him, can declare that for the sake of Christ God forgives his sins. And what one can do, the whole Church can do. The gift of absolution is Christ's gift, not to a priestly class, but to the Church, so that the Church can in His name forgive sins—the Church which is the communion of saints. The Church, through the Holy Spirit, preaches the gospel, administers the Sacraments, and declares the forgiveness of sins, which is the fruit of faith in gospel and Sacraments.

So this article maintains that the Lutherans do not oppose confession and absolution, but that both are to be used in a Scriptural way. They are to be, not the basis of a worldly judicial system administering, as it were, the law of God, but a means whereby a troubled soul may find comfort and peace. They are to be, not an inquisition into the sores of the soul, but a proclamation of the gospel, of the forgiving power of Christ speaking through the Church or the individual believer. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am

I in the midst of them," said Christ. There was a part of the Church, and to such is given the power of forgiving sins.

## ARTICLE XII.

Of Repentance, they teach, that for those that have fallen after Baptism, there is remission of sins whenever they are converted; and that the Church ought to impart absolution to those thus returning to repentance.

Now repentance consists properly of these two parts: One is contrition, that is, terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which, born of the Gospel, or of absolution, believes that, for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terrors. Then good works are bound to follow, which are the fruits of repentance.

They condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that those once justified can lose the Holy Ghost. Also those who contend that some may attain to such perfection in this life that they cannot sin. The Novatians also are condemned, who would not absolve such as had fallen after Baptism, though they returned to repentance. They also are rejected who do not teach that remission of sins cometh through faith, but command us to merit grace through satisfactions of our own.

The acts of confession and absolution which are the subject of Article XI were in the Roman Church a part of the sacrament of penance. The teaching of that church claimed that Baptism removed sin up to the moment of baptizing. And what of the sins committed after Baptism? In relation to these the system of confession, penance, and absolution was invented. The true nature of confession was held to be twofold, including attrition and contrition. When a man in sin began to feel the effects of sin and fear its results, his conscience-stricken state was called attrition. This would drive him to confession, and because of this good deed he would earn of God grace sufficient to make him experience contrition, or repentance. On confession the priest would direct him how to make amends for his sins, make satisfaction for them, and when this was done his sins were declared forgiven by the priest in the name of the Church. It was in this scheme of forgiveness that good works found a great place, and made man's salvation, to Luther, a reward for the good that a man did in payment for his sins.

The Lutheran Church does not deny that repentance is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. But it does deny that a man can even feel penitent of his own power. He cannot experience so much as attrition, or true fear of punishment, unless it be by the Spirit of God. He does not begin his salvation and then complete it by the help of God's grace given to him in the Sacrament. Man's only part in repentance is to believe that Christ can save him from sin. When in faith he receives Christ, Christ through law and gospel reveals to him the sinfulness of his heart, works in him grief for his sin and a longing for deliverance from sin. But once he has received Christ, he is justified, he has forgiveness of sins before God. On that account he knows his sin and he knows that God forgives sins. Repentance is a work of Christ in the human heart more than a work of man leading to Christ. He works sorrow for sin, and faith in His forgiving power. Because salvation is entirely a work of God its beginning as well as its continuation is His doing. And for the same reason the soul has peace and assurance when it has Christ, for it knows that His work is perfect and certain.

Repentance is not an experience apart from Baptism, so that another sacrament—that of penance—should be needed to supplement that one. As Baptism is the beginning, so repentance is the daily experience of the Christian life. He who is a child of God through the grace of Baptism grows into the deeper and conscious life of faith in Christ and finds ever within himself the sins of the old nature. But just his Baptism gives him the assurance of the gift of God's grace which is Christ Himself, and His power grows increasingly stronger and is able in increasing measure to subdue the forces of sin within him. By virtue of the new man of Christ the old man of sin is daily crucified and the new man rises to higher levels of righteousness. Through Him the fruits of repentance—a righteous life—is attained. But the complete subjection of sin does not belong to this life. Man here will never be without sin. He may even lose the faith through which he has grace. But the promise of Baptism can lead him back, for God's promise does not fail. "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ...willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance"—so reads the first of the Ninety-five Theses. It means as does this article that man receives daily forgiveness of sins and daily power for a righteous life when he allows Christ to judge his sin and impart the righteousness of God.

## ARTICLE XIII.

Of the Use of the Sacraments, they teach, that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the Sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered and set forth through the Sacraments.

They therefore condemn those who teach that the Sacraments justify by the outward act, and do not teach that, in the use of the Sacraments, faith which believes that sins are forgiven, is required.

It was the teaching of Zwingli and others that the Sacraments were instituted as a means of distinguishing between those who were Christians and those who were not. A Christian was baptized and celebrated the Lord's Supper as a mark of his discipleship. If there were any other meaning in the Sacraments it lay in the ability of these outward ceremonies to point to spiritual truths. This is still the teaching of the Reformed churches—that is, the Protestant bodies outside of the Lutheran and Anglican bodies.

Entirely different was the teaching of the Roman Church, and is to this day. Here the Sacraments—and the Roman Church has seven—are the main thing, the carriers of God's grace to man. Grace is a sort of spiritual substance which is infused into man somehow in these seven ceremonies. And if a man does not oppose its working, the power of the Sacraments works of itself, regardless of the person administering or receiving them. The grace that a man received through these Sacraments brought him favor and reward in the sight of God.

To this theory, that the Sacraments "justify by the outward act," that is, they bring salvation because of a power in themselves, Luther early opposed the teaching of the Scriptures. The Sacraments were not a system of magical powers conferred on the people by the priest. The chief thing in the Sacraments was the Word of Christ. In Baptism, "the water, without the Word of God, is simply water and no baptism." The Sacrament of the Altar is "bread and wine comprehended in and connected with the Word of God." On God's side then the Sacrament was another way of proclaiming His Word, a way seen by the eyes, a visible Word. As in the preaching of the Word the only requirement in the hearer was faith that believed, so here there is required a faith that believes the Christ who is proclaimed in the Sacraments. It must be a faith that believes the "For you" of the Word of Christ, that is, a faith that takes to itself the promise of the forgiveness of sins that has been made possible to us by the life and death of Christ.

In faith, then, the Sacraments are to be received. For only in faith can he receive what the Sacrament promises. His faith is not in the Sacrament but in what the Sacrament gives—Christ Himself. The error of the Romanists is that their faith rests in the outward deed, as if that could justify a man. The Sacrament is a *means*, and the believer receives the means in order to obtain its *end*, the presence of Christ. In faith the believer has already received the vision of the worth of the Sacrament, and through the Sacrament he enters into a fuller realization of its value. The Sacrament both proclaims, through the Word, a gospel which awakens faith, and gives, in Christ, a forgiveness of sins and a strengthening of faith. In some way that reason cannot understand the Christ whom faith receives transforms both the body and soul of the believer. For the Sacrament is also a pledge of the resurrection from the dead.

In the Lutheran Church the Sacraments are thus much more than signs and symbols. We too believe that they bind together a communion of believers, who in the use of the Sacraments proclaim to the world the fact that they are Christians. But we believe that Christ instituted the Sacraments for more profound reasons than this. We believe that, even in a more particular and effective way than He comes to us in the Word, He can come to the believer in the Sacrament. The Sacraments, with the Word, are the means of grace, the means whereby God proclaims and bestows the salvation in Christ upon believers. The Sacraments in the believer work a faith that comprehends the Christ who instituted these Sacraments.

## ARTICLE XIV.

Of Ecclesiastical Order, they teach, that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments, unless he be regularly called.

If the true Church is a communion of believers in Christ who in faith obtain the gifts of God through Christ, the question naturally arises, what is the use of the priestly system on which the Roman Church was built? If the priest has no privilege, according to the Word of God, that does not belong to every believer, and cannot, either in absolution or the Sacraments, do more than any member of the Church has the right and power to do, why then do we need any priests at all?

To this question the Anabaptists, who believed that God communicated his grace directly to the heart without any external means, answered that there is no need of priests, and they opposed the whole priestly class. Zwingli did not believe that the clergy had any extra spiritual powers either, but he wanted the preachers to remain as a guarantee of order in the outward organization of Church and State.

Luther taught that every believer is a priest in the sense that he can approach God directly and in faith receive God's gifts through and on account of Jesus Christ. There was no necessity of a priestly class to act as intermediates between the believer and God. Nor could Luther find Scriptural warrant for any priestly power to forgive sins or transform the elements in the Lord's Supper into the body and blood of Christ. In fact, in the Christian Church there is no need for priests.

But there is need for servants of God, who shall accomplish the purpose of the Church. We have seen that the Church is where the Word and the Sacraments are. Theoretically it is the duty and the privilege of each Christian to proclaim the Word and administer the Sacraments. But the individual's rights must not conflict with the order and welfare of the communion or congregation of which he is a part. Therefore the congregation chooses out of its midst that one whom it desires to proclaim the gospel and administer the Sacraments. This does not mean that the congregation institutes the office, for we have already found (in Article V) that the ministry is a part of God's institution for propagating the gospel. There can be no Church before the means of grace are present. So the office of preacher is inherent in the New Testament. But the filling of the office is a privilege of the congregation. The one who is called thus represents the congregation in its duty to witness to the truth which has called it into being. As the true Church is to be judged by its faithfulness in the use of the means of grace, so the true servant of the Church is to be judged by his preaching the Word in truth and purity and by his administering of the Sacraments as instituted by Christ.

Individually and in his home the Christian should testify of his Lord and Master, but publicly, in the Church, only they whom the congregation has called should teach and serve. The Christian is not complete unto himself but is a member in the body of Christ. His faith will show him the place to be filled by him in the larger body, whence he has the means of grace and to which he owes allegiance.

## ARTICLE XV.

Of Rites and Usages in the Church, they teach, that those ought to be observed which may be observed without sin, and which are profitable unto tranquillity and good order in the Church, as particular holy days, festivals, and the like.

Nevertheless, concerning such things, let men be admonished that consciences are not to be burdened, as though such observance were necessary to salvation. They are admonished also that human traditions instituted to propitiate God, to merit grace and to make satisfaction for sins, are opposed to the Gospel and the doctrine of faith. Wherefore vows and traditions concerning meats and days, etc., instituted to merit grace and to make satisfaction for sins, are useless and contrary to the Gospel.

When once it had become clear that a true Christian is one who has come to faith through the Word and the Sacraments and in that faith received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of a new life in Christ, then it became necessary to determine what stand such a Christian should take toward the many traditions and ceremonies and forms that throughout the centuries had gathered around the proclamation of the gospel and the life of the Church. For let us remember always that neither Luther nor his followers thought of themselves as setting up a new Church. There could be but one Church, because the Church was the body of believers in Christ, and there was but one Christ. So it was not the object of Luther to establish a new, but to purify the only, Church, or, rather, to make clear what the Church really is and how it has come to be and continues to live. The preceding articles of the Confession embody the Lutheran teaching on just those points.

But if the Church is spiritual and its members stand in spiritual fellowship with Christ, ought then all the external organization and forms be thrown overboard? The Anabaptists gave their reply in the affirmative and thus practically abolished the existing organization of the Church among themselves. But this was not Luther's purpose. The preceding article teaches the way in which the ministry should be retained and congregations continued. He and his associates also made clear that certain observances of Christendom ought to be retained, if they did not contradict the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Observance of Sunday, of the Christian holidays, forms of worship, customs connected with devotional life, for instance, could be continued as expressions of the Christian life. They had developed gradually in the Church and had the value of having been tested. What has stood the test of time has some value, and there was wisdom and good order in many of the Catholic traditions. The rule of the Lutherans, therefore, was to keep what was good, and to omit all that which was false. Therefore, the Lutheran Reformation has been called the "Conservative Reformation," a Reformation that conserved the best fruits of the Christian ages.

And the test of what was good and false, what should this be? Simply this: Do men believe that they are justified by the observance of this custom? If they did, the custom must either be given up, or men taught to understand its true use. Fasting, men did consider a good work, meriting grace from God for them. In this sense it must be eliminated; if it could be employed as a means of self-discipline, well and good. But it earned no grace to salvation. Similarly the giving of alms. Attitudes in prayer, customs in church services, and the like, might be kept, provided no one believed that these were good works which helped to make a man righteous. Furthermore, the Church had no right to make laws of such customs, and could bind no one to observe them. For there were no such laws in the New Testament, and the Church has no power to put obstacles in God's way of salvation. Rules and traditions of the Church are matters of form or convenience or self-regulation—they do not make a man righteous or unrighteous before God.

The Christian has his righteousness from Christ, and the Spirit that makes him a child of God also instructs him, through the Word, how he is to live. They who have Christ in their hearts will rightly regulate their individual and their congregational life. But no regulations of the individual or the congregation will bring Christ into the heart. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14. 17).

## ARTICLE XVI.

Of Civil Affairs, they teach, that lawful civil ordinances are good works of God, and that it is right for Christians to bear civil office, to sit as judges, to determine matters by the imperial and other existing laws, to award just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to make oath when required by the magistrates, to marry, to be given in marriage.

They condemn the Anabaptists who forbid these civil offices to Christians. They condemn also those who do not place the perfection of the gospel in the fear of God and in faith, but in forsaking civil offices; for the Gospel teaches an eternal righteousness of the heart. Meanwhile, it does not destroy the State or the family, but especially requires their preservation as ordinances of God, and in such ordinances the exercise of charity. Therefore, Christians are necessarily bound to obey their own magistrates and laws, save only when commanded to sin, for then they ought to obey God rather than men. [Acts 5. 29.]

One of the great questions in the civilization of western Europe and of America has been and still is: What is the right relationship between the Church and the State? In the Reformation three conflicting theories came together. It is only the truth when we say that the ideal of Luther still remains the most practical.

The Roman theory had worked itself out in the history of the Middle Ages. Simply stated, it was that the State is a handmaiden of the Roman Church and should do nothing contrary to the welfare of the papal church organization. On account of the sins of men God had instituted the rule of governments, but as the people received the grace of God through the Sacraments of the Church they came more and more under the rule of the Church and were less dependent on the secular powers. The popes of the Middle Ages went so far as to make and unmake kings and emperors in the attempt to force the temporal powers to serve the interests of the papacy.

On such a theory of the superiority of the Roman Church to the State, the field of good deeds was preferably in the Church. The government and its offices and duties were tolerated, but the truly laudable enterprises were ecclesiastical. To serve in the Church, to live as a monk or nun, to follow in the ways of pilgrims, to say masses or prayers, these were the highest occupations and in these the grace of God was the reward. The priestly class was superior to the laity, and among the priests the laws of the Church, not those of the State, were in force.

The second theory was that of the Anabaptists. As they discarded all churchly order, so they opposed all civil government. The Christian should live by the law of God, not by civil laws. It was even wrong, so they taught, to hold governmental positions, and the believer ought to shun all civil regulations, even to the point of deserting home and family and daily duties.

Different from both of these theories was the teaching of Luther. It is true, he said, that the laws are not necessary for Christians, whose faith reveals itself in a life that fulfils the law. But, only a minority of the population are Christian, and the Christian cannot force the non-Christian to live as he does. God has instituted laws and governments for the welfare of the community, and without such laws neither the community nor the Christians would long survive. The economy or regulation of the nation must be different from that of the congregation of believers because the constituents of the one are so different from those of the other. Yet the constitution of an unbelieving country is also a work of God, fitted to the nature of the people of that country. And the power of the government is derived from the Lord of nations. Consequently it is not wrong for a Christian to assume duties in the various branches of government. In fact, in such offices, or in any kind of work which may be his in the society of which he is a part, he has the opportunity of living his faith, professing his Christianity, and thus contributing to an ennobling of the community, raising it by so much toward the Christian idea of society.

Church and State each have their own sphere and are to a large extent independent of each other. But they are not antagonistic. Neither can one be superior to the other. The Christian is the connecting link between them, and he lives in both spheres. The State protects the Christian in the exercise of his religion. The Christian is the salt and the light of the State, seeking to transform it by the gospel and the example of his faithfulness, whatever may be his occupation.

## ARTICLE XVII.

Also they teach, that, at the Consummation of the World, Christ shall appear for judgment and shall raise up all the dead; He shall give to the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but ungodly men and the devils He shall condemn to be tormented without end.

They condemn the Anabaptists, who think that there will be an end to the punishments of condemned men and devils. They condemn also others, who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions that, before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed (exterminated).

The Church has no other ground on which to base its hope for eternity than the Word of God. Its only revelation concerning the return of Christ to judgment and the events to follow is given in the words of Christ. Since earliest times Christians have confessed that "He shall come to judge the quick and the dead" and that there shall be a "Resurrection of the body, and Life Everlasting." The Church has accepted the words of Jesus Christ as to the judgment unto life and unto condemnation. (Mt. 25.) Beyond His revelation lies only a region of speculation in which the mind can wander far but arrive at no destination. It is a principle of the

Lutheran Church to walk firmly on the solid ground of divine revelation, but to bow humbly before truths it cannot comprehend. Concerning the happenings and issues at the end of the world the Christian can but point to Christ and say, "These are His words."

Judging by such a standard as the Word of God, the Lutherans accepting the Augsburg Confession condemned those who recoiled before the clear teaching of Christ and modified His words as to eternal punishment. The Anabaptists had predecessors and they have had many followers, all teaching some more "reasonable" theory than Christ taught. Our own day has plenty of sects which deny the existence of a hell, and eternal punishment. But the Lutheran is less interested in theories than in facts, and the most important of all facts is that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Theories of punishment may be interesting, but salvation from death and reconciliation with God are the vital realities of revelation and of life. Because the possibility of eternal tragedy is so great the call to faith is so imperative. The seriousness of life lies in the eternal consequences of the soul's decision.

In the speculations that were prevalent concerning the mode of the coming of the kingdom of God, Luther saw more of Jewish speculation than of Christian teaching. Just as the Jews of Jesus' time dreamed of a Messianic kingdom in which they would be triumphant and exult over their enemies, so there were professing Christians in Luther's time, and have been until the present time, who are much absorbed in calculations as to time and prophecies relating to the nature of the coming of Christ. True, they based their ideas on scattered passages of Scripture. But just this fact, that their systems were mosaics of Biblical fragments rather than complete Biblical revelation, caused Luther, and the Lutheran Church after him, to oppose these constructions. These ideas of temporal rule and worldly power betray the character of those who hope for their fulfilment. The kingdom of God consists in righteousness, peace, and joy, and the members of it are content to await the coming of the King who shall make all things new. Meanwhile they will live in faith and be in harmony with the laws and ordinances of God instituted for the present world.

## ARTICLE XVIII.

Of the Freedom of the Will, they teach, that man's will has some liberty for the attainment of civil righteousness, and for the choice of things subject to reason. Nevertheless, it has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God [1 Cor. 2. 14]; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received through the Word. These things are said in as many words by Augustine in his *Hypognosticon,* Book III: "We grant that all men have a certain freedom of will in judging according to (natural) reason; not such freedom, however, whereby it is capable, without God, either to begin, or much less to complete aught in things pertaining to God, but only in works of this life, whether good or evil. 'Good,' I call those works which spring from the good in Nature, that is, to have a will to labor in the field, to eat and drink, to have a friend, to clothe oneself, to build a house, to marry, to keep cattle, to learn divers useful arts, or whatsoever good pertains to this life, none of which things are without dependence on the providence of God; yea, of Him and through Him they are and have their beginning. 'Evil,' I call such works as to have a will to worship an idol, to commit murder," etc.

They condemn the Pelagians and others who teach that, without the Holy Ghost, by the power of nature alone, we are able to love God above all things; also to do the commandments of God as touching "the substance of the act." For, although nature is able in some sort to do the outward work (for it is able to keep the hands from theft and murder), yet it cannot work the inward motions, such as the fear of God, trust in God, chastity, patience, etc.

Luther's interest in the theory of the freedom of the will was not philosophical or theoretical, but religious and practical. In man's relation to God he could find no freedom of the will, and he would rather that the term were not used in speaking of spiritual things. In his book against Erasmus on "The Captivity of the Will" he had said, "The free will is altogether a divine characteristic and can be attributed only to the Divine Majesty.—It ought to be enjoined upon the theologians to refrain from the use of this term when they speak of human abilities and to limit its use entirely to God."

For the condition of man, as Luther observed it, was not one of freedom, so that man could be pictured as standing between two kingdoms, that of God and that of the devil, and choosing to belong to the one or the other. In things of the spirit man is a slave, not a free man, and how can a slave choose, much less effect, his freedom? He is a slave to evil habits, to evil inclinations, to evil desire. His will is bound to the things of the earth. Not only does he not will the things of God, but he is opposed to God. As we have seen in the second article of the Augsburg Confession, man is "without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence." Man may speculate about a state of freedom, where he might will something different from what he is. But the fact is that he cannot choose. His nature is enslaved to the evil within and without himself. In matters of eating, drinking, working, and similar activities, he has a choice of certain alternatives. But in the matter of loving and trusting God and living a righteous life he can neither choose nor effect any change. He is of the earth, earthy. That which is flesh, chooses and does only the things of the flesh.

Wherein lies then the hope for man, if he cannot even will his own salvation? The Lutheran Church answers quite plainly, "In man himself there is no hope." Therefore a Saviour is needed. The entire ground of man's hope is in God. It is of grace alone that we are saved. We do not will our salvation and so invite God to accomplish it in us. God willed our salvation and sent His Son to make salvation possible. His first and most difficult task is to change our wills, so that we want the kind of salvation that He gives. "God would have all men to be saved," but no man wants to be saved, until the Spirit of God has created a new will in him.

This regeneration of the will is effected by the Holy Spirit, which transforms us in heart and mind so that we become holy. This transformation is not an immediate act of God in man's heart, but is the result of the Word and the Sacraments which the believer receives and obeys, through the power of the Spirit of God. Gradually the will is turned toward the kingdom of God, and God's will becomes the believer's will. Then the will is free in the sense that it can choose the right, whereas formerly it could serve only the evil. But even the freedom of the Christian is a complete dependence on God, and the Christian glories not in the freedom of the will but in the agreement of his own will with God's will.

There is thus no religious meaning to the term, "freedom of the will." Before conversion there is no freedom, and after conversion the Christian desires only God's will. A will that is free would be independent of both God and the devil. There is nowhere such a will, for every will that is not in accord with God's will is of the devil.

But man's question arises, "If God must change my will before I can believe, is not my faith God's responsibility, not my own?" The Lutheran Church answers, "Your faith is the work of God alone, your unbelief is your own work alone." The mystery of the unbelief of man is not so much a mystery of God as it is a mystery of man. God cannot understand the heart of one who turns away from all His grace and gifts, even the gift of Jesus Christ. It is the will of God that "the world should not perish, but have everlasting life," but the unbelieving of mankind "*would* not."

The unregenerate may speak of a will existing apart from God, and deserving God's work of salvation in their hearts. The twice-born man will readily admit that in him there is no will to do the righteousness of God, and that all the goodness within him is not his but that of Christ who has made him a new man. Such a one is willing to surrender his own will in which no good resides and to pray, "Thy will be done."

## ARTICLE XIX.

Of the Cause of Sin, they teach, that although God doth create and preserve nature, yet the cause of sin is the will of the wicked, that is, of the devil and ungodly men; which will, unaided of God, turns itself from God, as Christ says [John 8. 44]: "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own."

The reason for man's interest in the question of the freedom of the will is his interest in the extent of his responsibility to God. By denying that man could of his own will so much as begin the work of salvation in his heart, Luther and his fellow teachers seemed to throw all responsibility back upon God. Man could not even will to do right. Could he then be blamed for doing wrong? If God did not change his will so as to do right, was not God the cause of man's sin? So Eck and other opponents charged the Reformers with making God the cause of sin itself.

But to say that God creates man is not to say that God creates man's wickedness. It is true that God gives man his strength of arm and vision of eye, but it is not true that God enables that eye and arm to aim and deliver a blow which murders a fellow man. In the closing sentence of the previous article it was declared that the natural man "is able to keep the hands from theft and murder," wherefore even in the unregenerate state man's use of his powers is self-determined. Without the sustaining energy of God, man could neither live nor do wrong; life is God's gift, whereas the use of natural powers is not determined by God.

Man is enslaved to sin. So the Confession teaches in accordance with the Word of God and human experience. His deeds and inner life are determined by the master he serves. Man is not in the condition wherein he was created. By sinning he has given himself into the power of another than his Creator. This other power is the opponent of God's will. It is the will of the devil, who is the father of all untruth. God created neither angel nor man evil. But angel and man, unlike other forms of life in the universe, had and have the power to disobey their Creator. The source of sin is in the first spirit which set up a will contrary to the will of God. In doing sin man does "the deeds of his father" (John 8. 41). God is a God of holiness and righteousness, and His face is turned away from every form of iniquity. Therefore the devil and his servants are in the darkness of death. But it is not God that has left these creatures. They have turned away from Him.

The faith of the Lutheran Church rests on what man knows, not on what has not been revealed to him. The revelation of God has taken place in the sphere of the soul. In the Word and the Sacraments there is made manifest a way of salvation whereon man is raised from sin and death into life and righteousness. In Christ man knows the Creator and Saviour. Beyond this revelation are spheres of truth and fact which are concealed to the knowledge of man. The ways of God in nature, the means of God's attaining to His aims, the dealing of God with those outside the influence of the Church, these are mysteries which we must be content to leave as mysteries. To each one the vital matter is acceptance or rejection of the Christ, of the means of grace. Our responsibility is commensurate with our opportunity. To us the Word has been preached. Christ has come to us entirely without our merits or preparations. We can reject Him by hardening our hearts against Him. If we do so we follow the dictates of the father of lies. If we accept Him it is the Spirit of God who works in us the will of the Father of Truth.

In the dim regions of speculation about freedom of the will and the source of sin we can lose our way and our souls. In the sunlit plains of the Word of God man meets Christ and by His power is drawn into discipleship or, submitting to the power of the devil, turns himself away from God.

## ARTICLE XX.

Our teachers are falsely accused of forbidding Good Works. For their published writings on the Ten Commandments, and others of like import, bear witness that they have taught to good purpose concerning all estates and duties of life, as to what estates of life and what works in every calling be pleasing to God. Concerning these things preachers heretofore taught but little, and urged only childish and needless works, as particular holy days, particular fasts, brotherhoods, pilgrimages, services in honor of saints, the use of rosaries, monasticism, and such like. Since our adversaries have been admonished of these things they are now unlearning them, and do not preach these unprofitable works as heretofore. Besides they begin to mention faith, of which there was heretofore marvelous silence.

They teach that we are justified not by works only, but they conjoin faith and works, and say that we are justified by faith and works. This doctrine is more tolerable than the former one, and can afford more consolation than their old doctrine.

Forasmuch, therefore, as the doctrine concerning faith, which ought to be the chief one in the Church, has lain so long unknown, as all must needs grant that there was the deepest silence in their sermons concerning the righteousness of faith, while only the doctrine of works was treated in the churches, our teachers have instructed the churches concerning faith as follows:

First, that our works cannot reconcile God or merit forgiveness of sins, grace and justification, but that we obtain this only by faith, when we believe that we are received into favor for Christ's sake, who alone has been set forth the Mediator and Propitiation [1 Tim. 2. 5], in order that the Father may be reconciled through Him. Whoever, therefore, trusts that by works he merits grace, despises the merit and grace of Christ, and seeks a way to God without Christ, by human strength, although Christ has said of Himself: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" [John 14. 6].

This doctrine concerning faith is everywhere treated by Paul [Eph. 2. 8]: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works," etc.

And lest anyone should craftily say that a new interpretation of Paul has been devised by us, this entire matter is supported by the testimonies of the Fathers. For Augustine, in many volumes, defends grace and the righteousness of faith, over against the merits of works. And Ambrose, in his *De Vocatione Gentium*, and elsewhere, teaches to like effect. For in his *De Vocatione Gentium* he says as follows: "Redemption by the Blood of Christ would become of little value, neither would the preeminence of man's works be superseded by the mercy of God, if justification, which is wrought through grace, were due to the merits going before, so as to be, not the free gift of a donor, but the reward due to the laborer."

But, although this doctrine is despised by the experienced, nevertheless God-fearing and anxious consciences find by experience that it brings the greatest consolation, because consciences cannot be pacified through any works, but only by faith, when they are sure that, for Christ's sake, they have a gracious God. As Paul teaches [Rom. 5. 1]: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." This whole doctrine is to be referred to that conflict of the terrified conscience; neither can it be understood apart from that conflict. Therefore inexperienced and profane men judge ill concerning this matter, who dream that Christian righteousness is nothing but the civil righteousness of natural reason.

Heretofore consciences were plagued with the doctrine of works, nor did they hear any consolation from the Gospel. Some persons were driven by conscience into the desert, into monasteries, hoping there to merit grace by a monastic life. Some also devised other works whereby to merit grace and make satisfaction for sins. There was very great need to treat of and renew this doctrine of faith in Christ, to the end that anxious consciences should not be without consolation, but that they might know that grace and forgiveness of sins and justification are apprehended by faith in Christ.

Men are also admonished that here the term "faith" doth not signify merely the knowledge of the history, such as is in the ungodly and in the devil, but signifieth a faith which believes, not merely the history, but also the effect of the history —namely, this article of the forgiveness of sins, to wit, that we have grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins, through Christ.

Now he that knoweth that he has a Father reconciled to him through Christ, since he truly knows God, knows also that God careth for him, and calls upon God; in a word, he is not without God, as the heathen. For devils and the ungodly are not able to believe this article of the forgiveness of sins. Hence, they hate God as an enemy; call not upon Him; and expect no good from Him. Augustine also admonishes his readers concerning the word "faith," and teaches that the term "faith" is accepted in the Scriptures, not for knowledge such as is in the ungodly, but for confidence which consoles and encourages the terrified mind.

Furthermore, it is taught on our part, that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God. It is only by faith that forgiveness of sins and grace are apprehended. And because through faith the Holy Ghost is received, hearts are renewed and endowed with new affections, so as to be able to bring forth good works. For Ambrose says: "Faith is the mother of good will and right doing." For man's powers without the Holy Ghost are full of ungodly affections, and are too weak to do works which are good in God's sight. Besides, they are in the power of the devil, who impels men to divers sins, to ungodly opinions, to open crimes. This we may see in the philosophers, who, although they endeavored to live an honest life, could not succeed, but were defiled with many open crimes. Such is the feebleness of man, when he is without faith and without the Holy Ghost, and governs himself only by human strength.

Hence it may be readily seen that this doctrine is not to be charged with prohibiting good works, but rather the more to be commended, because it shows how we are able to do good works. For without faith, human nature can in no wise do the works of the First or of the Second Commandment. Without faith, it does not call upon God, nor expect anything from Him, nor bear the cross; but seeks and trusts in man's help. And thus, when there is no faith and trust in God, all manner of lusts and human devices rule in the heart. Wherefore Christ said [John 15. 5]: "Without me ye can do nothing," and the Church sings:

"Without Thy power divine
In man there nothing is,
Naught but what is harmful."

Article four treats of the nature of faith. Article six deals with the relationship of faith to good works. The twentieth article is a defense of the doctrine of justification by faith against those who held that this doctrine gave too much meaning to faith and took away too much from the power of works. It became necessary, therefore, to redefine the true significance of both Faith and Good Works.

Works such as the celebration of days, the keeping of fasts, pilgrimages, monastic observances, use of rosaries, and the like, are denied any particular power to aid the soul. The Reformers found no sanction for them in Scripture, and observed that they produced pride of spirit but no peace of conscience. These practices, moreover, obscured the glory of Christ and led men to seek salvation in their own deeds and merits.

"Faith" even as a term was misunderstood by the Romanists. The usage of Scripture and of the Fathers confirmed the experience of sincere Christians that faith is not merely knowledge of the events of the gospel, but rather an experience of the truth of Scripture. Faith not only knows something about Christ but has Christ and His gifts. They are reproached who are "inexperienced and profane" but would yet teach the nature of faith. Faith can be understood only by one who has faith in Christ and such an one knows his faith to be a *confidence* in Christ, and he knows a peace of conscience that never came before with his own strivings after righteousness.

This kind of a faith is not opposed to good works. On the contrary, it has the power of Christ to do righteous deeds. But the works God delights in and that true faith brings about are love to God and love to fellow men. Elsewhere it is characterized (by Luther, in Article VI of the Schwabach Articles) thus: "This faith is always doing what is good: towards God, by praise, thanksgiving, prayer, preaching and teaching, and towards neighbors by love, serving, aiding, counseling, giving, and lending, and by suffering every sort of evil, even unto death." These works are the spontaneous fruit of fellowship with God, not the artificial deeds of an unregenerate heart.

They who rightly understand, because they have sincerely experienced, the justifying power of the Christ who is received through faith, will also understand, because they experience, how true good deeds flow from a heart that has been transformed by the grace of God. In faith they have apprehended Him who forgives sins and works the righteousness of God.

## ARTICLE XXI.

Of the Worship of Saints, they teach, that the memory of saints may be set before us, that we may follow their faith and good works, according to our calling, as the Emperor may follow the example of David in making war to drive away the Turk from his country. For both are kings. But the Scripture teaches not the invocation of saints, or to ask help of saints, since it sets before us Christ as the only Mediator, Propitiation, High-priest, and Intercessor.

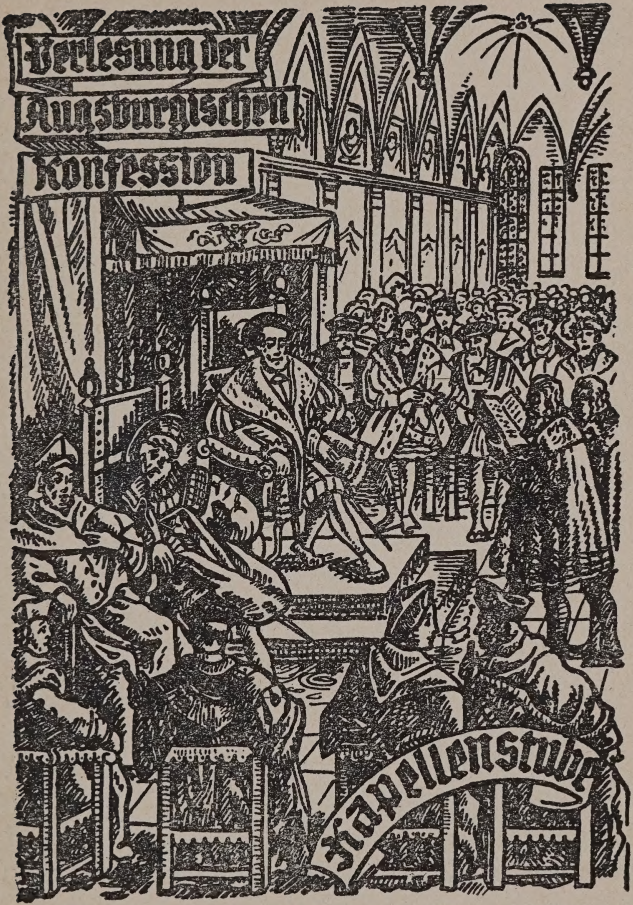
He is to be prayed to, and hath promised that He will hear our prayer; and this worship He approves above all, to wit, that in all afflictions He be called upon [1 John 2. 1]: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father," etc.

In the Roman Church there had grown up during the Middle Ages the universal custom of considering the saints as intermediaries between man and God and the practice of worshiping these saints in the hope that they would secure favors from God for the worshiper. Out of this veneration developed the many saints' days, so great in number that their frequency caused complaints in many quarters. But more vicious than an overabundance of holidays was the effect in the popular mind of this elevation of human beings into half-gods. For men came to worship the saints, and especially the greatest of the saints, the Virgin Mary, in preference to God Himself. Their merits and their powers impressed the people who were looking for bodily blessings and spiritual help, and to these saints arose the prayers of the multitudes at the countless shrines. The faith and trust of men were transferred to these intermediaries who were supposed to exercise influence upon God in His dealings with mankind.

This pernicious effect it was that led the Reformers to criticize the custom of the Roman Church. The holy lives of men and women of the Scriptures and of the Church might well be recalled to following generations. For in their careers Christians could find much instruction, guidance, and inspiration. But Luther reminded the Church that the Scriptures speak of living saints, and urged that saints in the faith be recognized and honored in the present life. Above all it was pointed out that the Scriptures do not teach that the canonized persons of the pope's making had any special standing or privileges in the kingdom of God. If they are in that kingdom they are there through no merits of their own, but alone by the grace of God. Surely then they had no superabundance of good works which could be distributed for the benefit of needy devotees.

In this matter as in every other doctrine of the Church, Luther's concern was to present Christ as the sole ground of man's salvation. Neither through the intervention of deceased characters of the Church nor through any works of their own could a man earn justification and life before God. Since in faith alone man can receive the Christ who justifies and regenerates and sanctifies the soul, therefore it must be the individual experience of the Christian with his God that brings him into the kingdom of God. The faith and character of another may point the way, but no one enters the gate of Life except through personal appropriation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We can do the holy men and women of previous periods no greater honor than by following their example of living the life of faith in personal fellowship with Christ.

This is about the sum of our doctrine, in which, as can be seen, there is nothing that varies from the Scriptures, or from the Church Catholic, or from the Church of Rome as known from its writers. This being the case, they judge harshly who insist that our teachers be regarded as heretics. The disagreement, however, is on certain Abuses, which have crept into the Church without rightful authority. And even in these, if there were some difference, there should be proper lenity on the part of bishops to bear with us by reason of the Confession which we have now drawn up; because even the Canons are not so severe as to demand the same rites everywhere, neither, at any time, have the rites of all churches been the same; although, among us, in large part, the ancient rites are diligently observed. For it is a false and malicious charge that all the ceremonies, all the things instituted of old, are abolished in our churches. But it has been a common complaint that some Abuses were connected with the ordinary rites. These, inasmuch as they could not be approved with a good conscience, have been to some extent corrected.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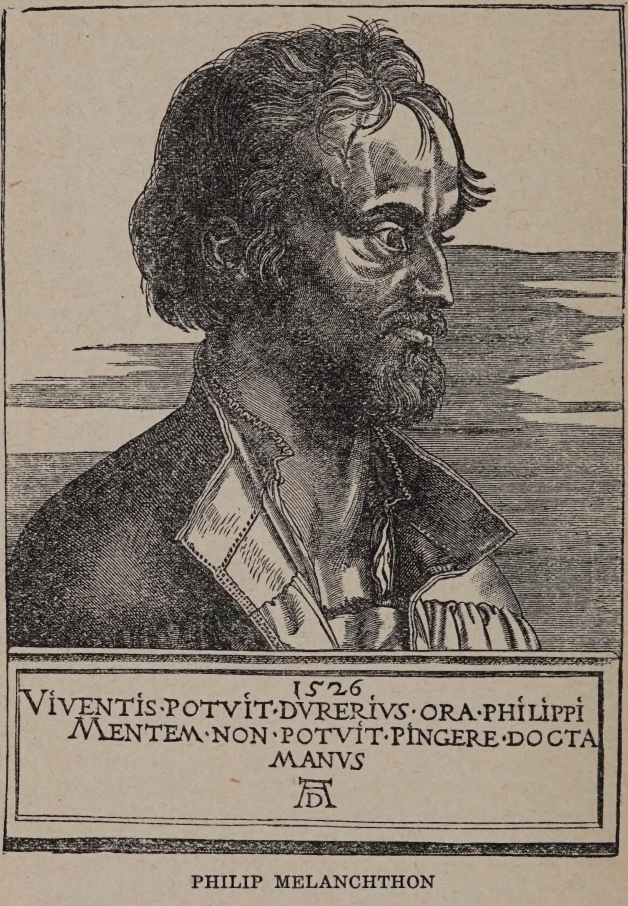
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PHILIP MELANCHTHON

# PART II

## Articles in Which Are Reviewed the Abuses Which Have Been Corrected

Inasmuch then as our churches dissent in no article of the Faith from the Church Catholic, but omit some Abuses which are new, and which have been erroneously accepted by fault of the times, contrary to the intent of the Canons, we pray that Your Imperial Majesty would graciously hear both what has been changed, and also what were the reasons, in order that the people be not compelled to observe those abuses against their conscience. Nor should Your Imperial Majesty believe those, who, in order to excite the hatred of men against our part, disseminate strange slanders among our people. Having thus excited the minds of good men, they have first given occasion to this controversy, and now endeavor, by the same arts, to increase the discord. For Your Imperial Majesty will undoubtedly find that the form of doctrine and of ceremonies with us, is not so intolerable as these ungodly and malicious men represent.. Furthermore, the truth cannot be gathered from common rumors, or the revilings of of our enemies. But it can readily be judged that nothing would serve better to maintain the dignity of worship, and to nourish reverence and pious devotion among the people than that the ceremonies be rightly observed in the churches.

It was this part of the Augsburg Confession that at first was to be submitted to the emperor by the elector of Saxony in defense of the changes in religious practices that had been undertaken in his territory. We have seen how the Confession became something else and something greater. Instead of an exposition of each article of this part, it is necessary here to give but a brief introduction to this section on abuses.

The practice of the Roman Church in withholding the cup from the laity in the celebration of Communion had been attacked even before Luther's time. In Bohemia followers of Huss were given both bread and wine at the altar in Luther's day. The Romanists defended their custom by claiming that the Church had the power to make such a regulation. But to the Reformers the institution of Christ was decisive. He not only gave His disciples the cup as well as the bread, but He expressly commanded, "Drink ye all." The words of Paul to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 11) clearly show that in the apostolic days the wine was not withheld from the laity. Against the authority of Christ, of apostles, of the early Church, of the Church Fathers, the Romanists would oppose the authority of the pope. Hence the Confession describes the Roman practice as an abuse which the Reformers have ample reason to correct.

Also the forbidding of marriage to priests is declared as an innovation of the Romanists. For the Scriptures know nothing of such a prohibition. Peter was a married man, and Paul commends marriage. The celibacy of the clergy was a comparatively late decree, issuing from Rome, and to this day has never been accepted as a doctrine in the Greek Catholic Church. Not only did Luther and his followers point to the teaching of Scripture and the practice of the early Church, but they found the reason for marriage in the physical nature of man. They denied that the clergy were to be considered as different from other men, or that they had special powers with which to overcome nature. Especially was it denied that celibacy was a good work before God which earned unusual grace from God. If marriage be a sacrament for the laity, it must be the same for the clergy, for both are counted righteous for Christ's sake, and not for any works of their own. There is no good reason for a difference in status between clergy and laity, and the immoral lives of the clergy of the pre-Reformation times formed a powerful argument in favor of marriage being allowed to the servants of the Church.

Both the withholding of the cup in the Communion and the prohibition of marriage to the clergy were due to the Roman doctrine that the Sacrament of the Altar was a sacrifice intrusted to a special class of men. Luther saw in the Roman mass the clearest expression of the error of the papal church. For in it the priests were supposed to offer anew the sacrifice of Christ and present this offering to God as a propitiation for sins. The celebration of this sacrifice was considered to merit grace from God, so that the more masses that were said the greater was God's reward. The reward could be applied to the sins of an individual or a group of individuals, and be effective both in this life and in purgatory. The saying of mass became the principal occupation of the clergy, and a principal source of income for the Roman See. The central doctrine of the Reformation was that men are justified by faith in Christ, and not by masses or any other human performances. With such a doctrine, the mass became something entirely different. We do not offer a sacrifice to God—Christ has once for all completed the sacrifice on the cross. It is ours to receive the gift of salvation, not ours to complete the work of the Giver. The whole structure of masses to be said at so much a piece and for so much reward per mass is discarded as a grievous human error. The Sacrament becomes what originally it was—a fellowship of the faithful with each other and with the living Christ who is present to give the gracious gifts made possible by His atoning death and eternal life. Priests chanting a mass in a foreign language and bringing a sacrifice for sin to a God who will credit this work to souls on earth and in purgatory—against this doctrine the Reformation raised a mighty protest. In the place of the mass, the preachers of the Reformation proclaimed a communion of believers whose fellowship was one of faith in the Christ whose sacrifice needs not to be repeated but needs ever and universally to be accepted.

Among the abuses the Reformers counted also the Roman custom of confession and absolution. What the Lutheran teachers preached in this matter we have already noted in Article XI. Here it is pointed out that satisfactions played too great a part in the Roman teaching of repentance, and that in former times too much stress had been laid on the enumeration of sins. These errors had been corrected by the Scriptural teaching of how sins are forgiven and to whom and by whom the words of absolution might be spoken.

The subject of the twenty-sixth article has received notice in a previous article (Article XV). Here the Roman Church is charged with obscuring the truth of the gospel by the emphasis laid on the matter of fasting, the observance of holy days, the ascetic practices of monks. For people came to look upon these as laws or necessary acts, by which God could be pleased and men merit His grace. And here again it is made clear that a right understanding of how men receive forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ alone will do away with false fear of human traditions and false trust in their fulfilment.

The same argument suffices for the defense of the Reformers in correcting another abuse, that of monasticism. "It is evident that monks have taught that services of man's making satisfy for sins and merit grace and justification." So the Confession indicates the root of error in monastic life. Men think that by making and fulfilling vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty, they shall earn forgiveness of sins and inherit life eternal. They even add that this life is superior to all occupations and arrogate to themselves the name "religious." These vows the Reformation showed to be unevangelical and contrary to the needs of the community as well as perversive of man's spiritual life. Monasticism was an abuse whose removal would by itself justify the Reformation.

The closing article of the Confession describes another of the conditions in the Roman Church which made a reformation necessary. The original province of a bishop was to preach the gospel and to administer the Sacraments—the duties we have already found in the article on the ministry. But in time the bishops had come to be assistant rulers to emperors and kings, and had become worldly princes. They made laws and executed them in temporal things. Then they went a step farther and made laws in spiritual matters, the pope assuming the power of a Supreme Ruler in the Church. Such a power is denied to the bishops by the Reformers. They have but one office, and that is the teaching of the gospel. They can make no laws contrary to that gospel, or add to the gospel regulations by which men can merit salvation. In worldly things the Christian must obey the duly appointed worldly ruler, but in spiritual things he is free from all authority save the all-sufficient authority of Christ as revealed in the Word, which it is the duty of the bishops to teach in truth and purity. The Church may make necessary rules and exercise due discipline but always these must be in agreement with the Word and since they are man-made they may be changed by man. "It is necessary that the chief article of the gospel be preserved, to wit, that we obtain grace freely by faith in Christ, and not for certain observances or acts of worship devised by men."

## ARTICLE XXII.

To the laity are given Both Kinds in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, because this usage has the commandment of the Lord [in Mt. 26. 27]: "Drink ye all of it"; where Christ has manifestly commanded concerning the cup that all should drink; and lest any man should craftily say that this refers only to priests, Paul [in 1 Cor. 11. 27] recites an example from which it appears that the whole congregation did use both kinds. And this usage has long remained in the Church, nor is it known when, or by whose authority, it was changed; although Cardinal Cusanus mentions the time when it was approved. Cyprian in some places testifies that the Blood was given to the people. The same is testified by Jerome, who says: "The priests administer the Eucharist, and distribute the Blood of Christ to the people." Indeed, Pope Gelasius commands that the sacrament be not divided (*Dist.* ii., *De Consecratione, Cap. Comperimus*). Only custom, not so ancient, has it otherwise. But it is evident that any custom introduced against the commandments of God is not to be allowed, as the Canons witness *(Dist.* iii., *Cap. Veritate,* and the following chapters). But this custom has been received, not only against the Scripture but also against the old Canons and examples of the Church. Therefore if any preferred to use both kinds of the sacrament, they ought not to have been compelled with offence to their consciences to do otherwise.

And because the division of the sacrament does not agree with the ordinance of Christ, we are accustomed to omit the procession, which hitherto has been in use.

## ARTICLE XXIII.

There has been common complaint concerning the Examples of Priests, who were not chaste. For that reason also, Pope Pius is reported to have said that there were certain reasons why marriage was taken away from priests, but that there were far weightier ones why it ought to be given back; for so Platina writes. Since, therefore, our priests were desirous to avoid those open scandals they married wives, and taught that it was lawful for them to contract matrimony. First, because Paul says [1 Cor. 7. 2]: "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife." Also [9]: "It is better to marry than to burn." Secondly, Christ says [Mt. 19. 11]: "All men cannot receive this saying," where He teaches that not all men are fit to lead a single life; for God created man for procreation [Gen. 1. 28]. Nor is it in man's power, without a singular gift and work of God, to alter this creation. Therefore those that are not fit to lead a single life ought to contract matrimony. For no man's law, no vow, can annul the commandment and ordinance of God. For these reasons the priests teach that it is lawful for them to marry wives. It is also evident that in the ancient Church priests were married men. For Paul says [1 Tim. 3. 2] that a bishop should be the husband of one wife. And in Germany, four hundred years ago for the first time, the priests were violently compelled to lead a single life, who indeed offered such resistance that the Archbishop of Mayence, when about to publish the Pope's decree concerning this matter, was almost killed in the tumult raised by the enraged priests. And so harsh was the dealing in the matter that not only were marriages forbidden for the time to come, but also existing marriages were torn asunder, contrary to all laws, divine and human, contrary even to the Canons themselves, made not only by the Popes but by most celebrated Councils.

Seeing also that, as the world is aging, man's nature is gradually growing weaker, it is well to guard that no more vices steal into Germany. Furthermore, God ordained marriage to be a help against human infirmity. The Canons themselves say that the old rigor ought now and then, in the latter times, to be relaxed because of the weakness of men; which it is to be devoutly wished were done also in this matter. And it is to be expected that the churches shall at length lack pastors, if marriage should be any longer forbidden.

But while the commandment of God is in force, while the custom of the Church is well known, while impure celibacy causes many scandals, adulteries, and other crimes deserving the punishments of just magistrates, yet it is a marvelous thing that in nothing is more cruelty exercised than against the marriage of priests. God has given commandment to honor marriage. By the laws of all well-ordered commonwealths, even among the heathen, marriage is most highly honored. But now men, and also priests, are cruelly put to death, contrary to the intent of the Canons, for no other cause than marriage. Paul [in 1 Tim. 4. 3] calls that a doctrine of devils, which forbids marriage. This may now be readily understood when the law against marriage is maintained by such penalties.

But as no law of man can annul the commandment of God, so neither can it be done by any vow. Accordingly Cyprian also advises that women who do not keep the chastity they have promised should marry. His words are these [Book I., Epistle xi.]: "But if they be unwilling or unable to persevere, it is better for them to marry than to fall into the fire by their lusts; at least, they should give no offence to their brethren and sisters." And even the Canons show some leniency toward those who have taken vows before the proper age, as heretofore has generally been the case.

## ARTICLE XXIV.

Falsely are our churches accused of Abolishing the Mass; for the Mass is retained on our part, and celebrated with the highest reverence. All the usual ceremonies are also preserved, save that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added to teach the people. For ceremonies are needed to this end alone, that the unlearned be taught. And not only has Paul commanded to use in the Church a language understood by the people [1 Cor. 14. 2, 9], but it has also been so ordained by man's law.

The people are accustomed to partake of the Sacrament together, if any be fit for it, and this also increases the reverence and devotion of public worship. For none are admitted except they be first proved. The people are also advised concerning the dignity and use of the Sacrament, how great consolation it brings anxious consciences, that they may learn to believe God, and to expect and ask of Him all that is good. This worship pleases God; such use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God. It does not, therefore, appear that the Mass is more devoutly celebrated among our adversaries, than among us.

But it is evident that for a long time, it has been the public and most grievous complaint of all good men, that Masses have been basely profaned and applied to purposes of lucre. For it is unknown how far this abuse obtains in all the churches, by what manner of men Masses are said only for fees or stipends, and how many celebrate them contrary to the Canons. But Paul severely threatens those who deal unworthily with the Eucharist, when he says [1 Cor. 11. 27]: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." When, therefore, our priests were admonished concerning this sin, Private Masses were discontinued among us, as scarcely any Private Masses were celebrated except for lucre's sake.

Neither were the bishops ignorant of these abuses, and if they had corrected them in time, there would now be less dissension. Heretofore, by their own negligence, they suffered many corruptions to creep into the Church. Now, when it is too late, they begin to complain of the troubles of the Church, seeing that this disturbance has been occasioned simply by those abuses, which were so manifest that they could be borne no longer. Great dissensions have arisen concerning the Mass, concerning the Sacrament. Perhaps the world is being punished for such long-continued profanations of the Mass, as have been tolerated in the churches for so many centuries, by the very men who were both able and in duty bound to correct them. For, in the Ten Commandments, it is written [Exodus 20], "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." But since the world began, nothing that God ever ordained seems to have been so abused for filthy lucre as the Mass.

There was also added the opinion which infinitely increased Private Masses, namely, that Christ, by His passion, had made satisfaction for original sin, and instituted the Mass wherein an offering should be made for daily sins, venial and mortal. From this has arisen the common opinion that the Mass taketh away the sins of the living and the dead, by the outward act. Then they began to dispute whether one Mass said for many were worth as much as special Masses for individuals, and this brought forth that infinite multitude of Masses. Concerning these opinions our teachers have given warning, that they depart from the Holy Scriptures and diminish the glory of the passion of Christ. For Christ's passion was an oblation and satisfaction, not for original guilt only, but also for all sins, as it is written to the Hebrews [10. 10], "We are sanctified through the offering of Jesus Christ, once for all." Also, 10. 14: "By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Scripture also teaches that we are justified before God through faith in Christ, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. Now if the Mass take away the sins of the living and the dead by the outward act, justification comes of the work of Masses, and not of faith, which Scripture does not allow.

But Christ commands us [Luke 22. 19], "This do in remembrance of me"; therefore the Mass was instituted that the faith of those who use the Sacrament should remember what benefits it receives through Christ, and cheer and comfort the anxious conscience. For, to remember Christ, is to remember His benefits, and to realize that they are truly offered unto us. Nor is it enough only to remember the history, for this the Jew and the ungodly also can remember. Wherefore the Mass is to be used to this end, that there the Sacrament [Communion] may be administered to them that have need of consolation; as Ambrose says: "Because I always sin, I am always bound to take the medicine."

Now forasmuch as the Mass is such a giving of the Sacrament, we hold one communion every holyday, and also other days, when any desire the Sacrament it is given to such as ask for it. And this custom is not new in the Church; for the Fathers before Gregory made no mention of any private Mass, but of the common Mass [the Communion] they speak very much. Chrysostom says that the priest stands daily at the altar, inviting some to the Communion and keeping back others. And it appears from the ancient Canons, that some one celebrated the Mass from whom all the other presbyters and deacons received the Body of the Lord; for thus the words of the Nicene Canon say: "Let the deacons, according to their order, receive the Holy Communion after the presbyters, from the bishop or from a presbyter." And Paul [1 Cor. 11. 33] commands concerning the Communion: "Tarry one for another," so that there may be a common participation.

Forasmuch, therefore, as the Mass with us has the example of the Church, taken from the Scripture and the Fathers, we are confident that it cannot be disapproved, especially since the public ceremonies are retained for the most part, like those hitherto in use; only the number of Masses differs, which, because of very great and manifest abuses, doubtless might be profitably reduced. For in olden times, even in churches most frequented, the Mass was not celebrated every day, as the Tripartite History (Book 9, chap. 33) testifies: "Again in Alexandria, every Wednesday and Friday, the Scriptures are read, and the doctors expound them, and all things are done, except only the celebration of the Eucharist."

## ARTICLE XXV.

Confession in our churches is not abolished; for it is not usual to give the Body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved. And the people are most carefully taught concerning the faith and assurance of absolution, about which, before this time, there was profound silence. Our people are taught that they should highly prize the absolution, as being the voice of God, and pronounced by His command. The power of the Keys is commended, and we show what great consolation it brings to anxious consciences; that God requires faith to believe such absolution as a voice sounding from Heaven, and that such faith in Christ truly obtains and receives the forgiveness of sins.

Aforetime, satisfactions were immoderately extolled; of faith and the merit of Christ, and the righteousness of faith, no mention was made; wherefore, on this point, our churches are by no means to be blamed. For this even our adversaries must needs concede to us, that the doctrine concerning repentance has been most diligently treated and laid open by our teachers.

But of Confession, they teach, that an enumeration of sins is not necessary, and that consciences be not burdened with anxiety to enumerate all sins, for it is impossible to recount all sins, as the Psalm testifies [19. 12]: "Who can understand his errors?" Also Jeremiah [17. 9]: "The heart is deceitful, who can know it?" But if no sins were forgiven, except those that are recounted, consciences could never find peace; for very many sins they neither see, nor can remember.

The ancient writers also testify that an enumeration is not necessary. For, in the Decrees, Chrysostom is quoted, who thus says: "I say not to thee, that thou shouldest disclose thyself in public, nor that thou accuse thyself before others, but I would have thee obey the prophet who says: 'Disclose thy way before God.' Therefore confess thy sins before God, the true Judge, with prayer. Tell thine errors, not with the tongue, but with the memory of thy conscience." And the Gloss ("Of Repentance," *Distinct.* v, *Cap. Consideret*) admits that Confession of human right only. Nevertheless, on account of the great benefit of absolution, and because it is otherwise useful to the conscience, Confession is retained among us.

## ARTICLE XXVI.

It has been the general persuasion, not of the people alone, but also of such as teach in the churches, that making Distinctions of Meats, and like traditions of men, are works profitable to merit grace, and able to make satisfactions for sins. And that the world so thought, appears from this, that new ceremonies, new orders, new holydays, and new fastings were daily instituted, and the teachers in the churches did exact these works as a service necessary to merit grace, and did greatly terrify men's consciences, if they should omit any of these things. From this persuasion concerning traditions, much detriment has resulted in the Church.

First, the doctrine of grace and of the righteousness of faith has been obscured by it, which is the chief part of the Gospel, and ought to stand out, as the most prominent in the Church, that the merit of Christ may be well known, and that faith, which believes that sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, may be exalted far above works. Wherefore Paul also lays the greatest stress on this article, putting aside the law and human traditions, in order to show that the righteousness of the Christian is another than such works, to wit, the faith which believes that sins are freely forgiven for Christ's sake. But this doctrine of Paul has been almost wholly smothered by traditions, which have produced an opinion that, by making distinctions in meats and like services, we must merit grace and righteousness. In treating of repentance, there was no mention made of faith; all that was done was to set forth these works of satisfaction, and in these all repentance seemed to consist.

Secondly, these traditions have obscured the commandments of God; because traditions were placed far above the commandments of God. Christianity was thought to consist wholly in the observance of certain holydays, fasts and vestures. These observances had won for themselves the exalted title of being the spiritual life and the perfect life. Meanwhile the commandments of God, according to each one's calling, were without honor, namely, that the father brought up his family, that the mother bore children, that the Prince governed the Commonwealth,—these were accounted works that were worldly and imperfect, and far below those glittering observances. And this error greatly tormented devout consciences, which grieved that they were bound by an imperfect state of life, as in marriage, in the office of magistrate, or in other civil ministrations; on the other hand, they admired the monks and such like, and falsely imagined that the observances of such men were more acceptable to God.

Thirdly, traditions brought great danger to consciences; for it was impossible to keep all traditions, and yet men judged these observances to be necessary acts of worship. Gerson writes that many fell into despair, and that some even took their own lives, because they felt that they were not able to satisfy the traditions; and meanwhile, they heard not the consolation of the righteousness of faith and grace.

We see that the summists and theologians gather the traditions together, and seek mitigations whereby to ease consciences, and yet they do not succeed in releasing them, but sometimes entangle consciences even more. And with the gathering of these traditions, the schools and sermons have been so much occupied that they have had no leisure to touch upon Scripture, and to seek the more profitable doctrine of faith, of the cross, of hope, of the dignity of civil affairs, of consolation of sorely tried consciences. Hence Gerson, and some other theologians, have grievously complained, that by these strivings concerning traditions they were prevented from giving attention to a better kind of doctrine. Augustine also forbids that men's consciences should be burdened with such observances, and prudently advises Januarius, that he must know that they are to be observed as things indifferent; for these are his words.

Wherefore our teachers must not be looked upon as having taken up this matter rashly, or from hatred of the bishops, as some falsely suspect. There was great need to warn the churches of these errors, which had arisen from misunderstanding the traditions. For the Gospel compels us to insist in the churches upon the doctrine of grace, and of the righteousness of faith; which, however, cannot be understood, if men think that they merit grace by observances of their own choice.

Thus, therefore, they have taught, that by the observance of human traditions we cannot merit grace, or be justified; and hence we must not think such observances necessary acts of worship.

They add hereunto testimonies of Scripture. Christ [Mt. 15. 3] defends the Apostles who had not observed the usual tradition, which however, seemed to pertain to a matter not unlawful, but indifferent, and to have a certain affinity with the purifications of the law, and says [9]: "In vain do they worship me with the commandments of men." He, therefore, does not exact an unprofitable service. Shortly after, he adds [11]: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man." So also Paul [Rom. 14. 17]: "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink." [Col. 2. 16]: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the Sabbath day"; also [v. 20, sq.]: "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, touch not, taste not, handle not?" And Peter says [Acts 15. 10]: "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers, nor we were able to bear; but we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Here Peter forbids to burden the consciences with many rites, either of Moses, or of others.

And in 1 Tim. [4. 1, 3], Paul calls the prohibition of meats a doctrine of devils; for it is against the Gospel to institute or do such works that by them we may merit grace, or as though Christianity could not exist without such service of God.

Here our adversaries cast up that our teachers are opposed to discipline and mortification of the flesh, as Jovinian. But the contrary may be learned from the writings of our teachers. For they have always taught concerning the cross, that it behooves Christians to bear afflictions. This is the true, earnest and unfeigned mortification, to wit, to be exercised with divers afflictions, and to be crucified with Christ.

Moreover, they teach, that every Christian ought to exercise and subdue himself with bodily restraints and labors, that neither plenty nor slothfulness tempt him to sin, but not that we may merit grace or make satisfaction for sins by such exercises. And such external discipline ought to be urged at all times, not only on a few and set days. So Christ commands [Luke 21. 34]: "Take heed, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting;" also [Mt. 17. 21]: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Paul also says [1 Cor. 9. 27]: "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection." Here he clearly shows that he was keeping under his body, not to merit forgiveness of sins by that discipline, but to have his body in subjection and fitted for spiritual things, and for the discharge of duty according to his calling. Therefore, we do not condemn fasting, but the traditions which prescribe certain days and certain meats, with peril of conscience, as though works of such kinds were a necessary service.

Nevertheless, very many traditions are kept on our part, which conduce to good order in the Church, as the Order of Lessons in the Mass, and the chief holydays. But, at the same time, men are warned that such observances do not justify before God, and that, in such things, it should not be made sin, if they be omitted without scandal. Such liberty in human rites was not unknown to the Fathers. For in the East they kept Easter at another time than at Rome, and when, on account of this diversity, the Romans accused the Eastern Church of schism, they were admonished by others that such usages need not be alike everywhere. And Irenæus says: "Diversity concerning fasting does not destroy the harmony of faith." As also Pope Gregory intimates in *Dist.* xii., that such diversity does not violate the unity of the Church. And in the Tripartite History, Book 9, many examples of dissimilar rites are gathered, and the following statement is made: "It was not the mind of the Apostles to enact rules concerning holydays, but to preach godliness and a holy life."

## ARTICLE XXVII.

What is taught, on our part, concerning Monastic Vows, will be better understood, if it be remembered what has been the state of the monasteries, and how many things were daily done in those very monasteries, contrary to the Canons. In Augustine's time, they were free associations. Afterward, when discipline was corrupted, vows were everywhere added for the purpose of restoring discipline, as in a carefully planned prison. Gradually, many other observances were added besides vows. And these fetters were laid upon many before the lawful age, contrary to the Canons. Many also entered into this kind of life through ignorance, being unable to judge their own strength, though they were of sufficient age. Being thus ensnared, they were compelled to remain, even though some could have been freed by the provision of the Canons. And this was more the case in convents of women than of monks, although more consideration should have been shown the weaker sex. This rigor displeased many good men before this time, who saw that young men and maidens were thrown into convents for a living, and what unfortunate results came of this procedure, and what scandals were created, what snares were cast upon consciences! They were grieved that the authority of the Canons in so momentous a matter was utterly despised and set aside.

To these evils was added an opinion concerning vows, which, it is well known, in former times, displeased even those monks who were more thoughtful. They taught that vows were equal to Baptism; they taught that, by this kind of life, they merited forgiveness of sins and justification before God. Yea, they added that the monastic life not only merited righteousness before God, but even greater things, because it kept not only the precepts, but also the so-called "evangelical counsels."

Thus they made men believe that the profession of monasticism was far better than Baptism, and that the monastic life was more meritorious than that of magistrates, than the life of pastors and such like, who serve their calling in accordance with God's commands, without any man-made services. None of these things can be denied; for they appear in their own books.

What then came to pass in the monasteries? Aforetime, they were schools of Theology and other branches, profitable to the Church; and thence pastors and bishops were obtained. Now it is another thing. It is needless to rehearse what is known to all. Aforetime they came together to learn; now they feign that it is a kind of life instituted to merit grace and righteousness; yea, they preach that it is a state of perfection, and they put it far above all other kinds of life ordained of God.

These things we have rehearsed without odious exaggeration, to the end that the doctrine of our teachers, on this point, might be better understood.

First, concerning such as contract matrimony, they teach, on our part, that it is lawful for all men who are not fitted for single life to contract matrimony, because vows cannot annul the ordinance and commandment of God. But the commandment of God is [1 Cor. 7. 2]: "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife." Nor is it the commandment only, but also the creation and ordinance of God, which forces those to marry who are not excepted by a singular work of God, according to the text [Gen. 2. 18]: "It is not good that the man should be alone." Therefore they do not sin who obey this commandment and ordinance of God. What objection can be raised to this? Let men extol the obligation of a vow as much as they list, yet shall they not bring to pass that the vow annuls the commandment of God. The Canons teach that the right of the superior is excepted in every vow; much less, therefore, are these vows of force which are against the commandments of God.

Now if the obligation of vows could not be changed for any cause whatever, the Roman Pontiffs could never have given dispensation; for it is not lawful for man to annul an obligation which is altogether divine. But the Roman Pontiffs have prudently judged that leniency is to be observed in this obligation, and therefore we read that many times they have dispensed from vows. The case of the King of Aragon who was called back from the monastery is well known, and there are also examples in our own times.

In the second place, Why do our adversaries exaggerate the obligation or effect of a vow, when, at the same time, they have not a word to say of the nature of the vow itself, that it ought to be in a thing possible, free, and chosen spontaneously and deliberately. But it is not known to what extent perpetual chastity is in the power of man. And how few are there who have taken the vow spontaneously and deliberately! Young men and maidens, before they are able to judge, are persuaded, and sometimes even compelled, to take the vow. Wherefore it is not fair to insist so rigorously on the obligation, since it is granted by all that it is against the nature of a vow to take it without spontaneous and deliberate action.

Many canonical laws rescind vows made before the age of fifteen; for before that age, there does not seem sufficient judgment in a person to decide concerning a perpetual life. Another Canon, granting even more liberty to the weakness of man, adds a few years, and forbids a vow to be made before the age of eighteen. But whether we followed the one or the other, the most part have an excuse for leaving the monasteries, because most of them have taken the vows before they reached these ages.

But, finally, even though the violation of a vow might be rebuked, yet it seems not forthwith to follow that the marriages of such persons ought to be dissolved. For Augustine denies that they ought to be dissolved (xxvii. Quæst. I., Cap. *Nuptiarum*); and his authority is not lightly to be esteemed, although other men afterwards thought otherwise.

But although it appears that God's command concerning marriage delivers many from their vows, yet our teachers introduce also another argument concerning vows, to show that they are void. For every service of God, ordained and chosen of men without the commandment of God to merit justification and grace, is wicked; as Christ says [Mt. 15. 9]: "In vain do they worship me with the commandments of men." And Paul teaches everywhere that righteousness is not to be sought by our own observances and acts of worship, devised by men, but that it comes by faith to those who believe that they are received by God into grace for Christ's sake.

But it is evident that monks have taught that services of man's making satisfy for sins and merit grace and justification. What else is this but to detract from the glory of Christ and to obscure and deny the righteousness of faith? It follows, therefore, that the vows thus commonly taken, have been wicked services, and, consequently, are void. For a wicked vow, taken against the commandment of God, is not valid; for (as the Canon says) no vow ought to bind men to wickedness.

Paul says [Gal. 5. 4]: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." They, therefore, who want to be justified by their vows, are made void of Christ and fall from grace. For such as ascribe justification to vows, ascribe to their own works that which properly belongs to the glory of Christ. But it is undeniable that the monks have taught that, by their vows and observances, they were justified, and merited forgiveness of sins, yea, they invented still greater absurdities, saying that they could give others a share in their works. If any one should be inclined to enlarge on these things with evil intent, how many things could he bring together, whereof even the monks are now ashamed! Over and above this, they persuaded men that services of man's making were a state of Christian perfection. And is not this assigning justification to works? It is no light offence in the Church to set forth to the people a service devised by men, without the commandment of God, and to teach that such service justifies men. For the righteousness of faith in Christ, which chiefly ought to be in the Church, is obscured, when this wonderful worshipping of angels, with its show of poverty, humility and chastity, is cast before the eyes of men.

Furthermore, the precepts of God and the true service of God are obscured when men hear that only monks are in a state of perfection. For Christian perfection is to fear God from the heart, again to conceive great faith and to trust that, for Christ's sake, we have a gracious God, to ask of God, and assuredly to expect his aid in all things that, according to our calling, are to be borne; and meanwhile, to be diligent in outward good works, and to serve our calling. In these things consist the true perfection and the true service of God. It does not consist in the unmarried life, or in begging, or in vile apparel. But the people conceive many pernicious opinions from the false commendations of monastic life. They hear unmarried life praised above measure; therefore they lead their married life with offence to their consciences. They hear that only beggars are perfect; therefore they keep their possessions and do business with offence to their consciences. They hear that it is an evangelical counsel not to avenge; therefore some in private life are not afraid to take revenge, for they hear that it is but a counsel, and not a commandment; while others judge that the Christian cannot properly hold a civil office, or be a magistrate.

There are on record examples of men who, forsaking marriage and the administration of the Commonwealth, have hid themselves in monasteries. This they called fleeing from the world, and seeking a kind of life which should be more pleasing to God. Neither did they see that God ought to be served in those commandments which he himself has given, and not in commandments devised by men. A good and perfect kind of life is that which has for it the commandment of God. It is necessary to admonish men of these things. And before these times, Gerson rebuked this error concerning perfection, and testified that, in his day, it was a new saying that the monastic life is a state of perfection.

So many wicked opinions are inherent in the vows, such as that they justify, that they constitute Christian perfection, that they keep the counsels and commandments, that they have works of supererogation. All these things, since they are false and empty, make vows null and void.

## ARTICLE XXVIII.

There has been great controversy concerning the Power of Bishops, in which some have awkwardly confounded the power of the Church and the power of the sword. And from this confusion very great wars and tumults have resulted, while the Pontiffs, emboldened by the power of the Keys, not only have instituted new services and burdened consciences with reservation of cases, but have also undertaken to transfer the kingdoms of this world, and to take the Empire from the Emperor. These wrongs have long since been rebuked in the Church by learned and godly men. Therefore, our teachers, for the comforting of men's consciences, were constrained to show the difference between the power of the Church and the power of the sword, and taught that both of them, because of God's commandment, are to be held in reverence and honor, as among the chief blessings of God on earth.

But this is their opinion, that the power of the Keys, or the power of the bishops, according to the Gospel, is a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer sacraments. For with that commandment Christ sends forth his Apostles [John 20. 21 sqq.]: "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." [Mark 16. 15]: "Go, preach the Gospel to every creature."

This power is exercised only by teaching or preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments, according to the calling, either to many or to individuals. For thereby are granted, not bodily, but eternal things, as eternal righteousness, the Holy Ghost, eternal life. These things cannot come but by the ministry of the Word and the sacraments. As Paul says [Rom. 1. 16]: "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Therefore, since the power of the Church grants eternal things, and is exercised only by the ministry of the Word, it does not interfere with civil government; no more than the art of singing interferes with civil government. For civil government deals with other things than does the Gospel; the civil rulers defend not souls, but bodies and bodily things against manifest injuries, and restrain men with the sword and bodily punishments in order to preserve civil justice and peace.

Therefore the power of the Church and the civil power must not be confounded. The power of the Church has its own commission, to teach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments. Let it not break into the office of another; let it not transfer the kingdoms of this world; let it not abrogate the laws of civil rulers; let it not abolish lawful obedience; let it not interfere with judgments concerning civil ordinances or contracts; let it not prescribe laws to civil rulers concerning the form of the Commonwealth. As Christ says [John 18. 36]: "My kingdom is not of this world"; also [Luke 12. 14]: "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Paul also says [Phil. 3. 20]: "Our citizenship is in heaven"; [2 Cor. 10. 4]: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but mighty through God to the casting down of imaginations." After this manner, our teachers discriminate between the duties of both these powers, and command that both be honored and acknowledged as gifts and blessings of God.

If bishops have any power of the sword, that power they have, not as bishops, by the commission of the Gospel, but by human law, having received it of Kings and Emperors, for the civil administration of what is theirs. This, however, is another office than the ministry of the Gospel.

When, therefore, a question arises concerning the jurisdiction of bishops, civil authority must be distinguished from ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Again, according to the Gospel, or, as they say, according to Divine Law, to the bishops as bishops, that is, to those to whom has been committed the ministry of the Word and the sacraments, no jurisdiction belongs, except to forgive sins, to discern doctrine, to reject doctrines contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the communion of the Church wicked men, whose wickedness is known, and this without human force, simply by the Word. Herein the congregations are bound by Divine Law to obey them, according to Luke 10. 16: "He that heareth you, heareth me."

But when they teach or ordain anything against the Gospel, then the congregations have a commandment of God prohibiting obedience [Matt. 7. 15]: "Beware of false prophets"; [Gal. 1. 8]: "Though an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel let him be accursed"; [2 Cor. 13. 8]: "We can do nothing against the truth; but for the truth." Also [v. 10]: "The power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction." So, also, the Canonical Laws command (II Q. vii. Cap. *Sacerdotes* and Cap. *Oves*). And Augustine (*Contra Petiliani Epistolam*): "Not even to Catholic bishops must we submit, if they chance to err, or hold anything contrary to the Canonical Scriptures of God."

If they have any other power or jurisdiction, in hearing and judging certain cases, as of matrimony or of tithes, they have it by human law. But where the ordinances fail, princes are bound, even against their will, to dispense justice to their subjects for the maintenance of peace.

Moreover, it is disputed whether bishops or pastors have the right to introduce ceremonies in the Church, and to make laws concerning meats, holydays and degrees, that is, orders of ministers, etc. They that claim this right for the bishops, refer to this testimony [John 16. 12, 13]: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." They also refer to the example of the Apostles, who commanded to abstain from blood and from things strangled [Acts

15. 29]. They refer to the Sabbath Day, as having been changed into the Lord's Day, contrary to the Decalogue, as it seems. Neither is there any example whereof they make more than concerning the changing of the Sabbath Day. Great, say they, is the power of the Church, since it has dispensed with one of the Ten Commandments!

But, concerning this question, it is taught on our part (as has been shown above), that bishops have no power to decree anything against the Gospel. The Canonical laws teach the same thing (*Dist.* ix.). Now it is against Scripture to establish or require the observance of any traditions, to the end that, by such observance, we may make satisfaction for sins, or merit grace and righteousness. For the glory of Christ's merit is dishonored when, by such observances, we undertake to merit justification. But it is manifest that, by such belief, traditions have almost infinitely multiplied in the Church, the doctrine concerning faith and the righteousness of faith being meanwhile suppressed. For gradually more holydays were made, fasts appointed, new ceremonies and services in honor of saints instituted; because the authors of such things thought that, by these works, they were meriting grace. Thus, in times past, the Penitential Canons increased, whereof we still see some traces in the satisfactions.

Again, the authors of traditions do contrary to the command of God when they find matters of sin in foods, in days, and like things, and burden the Church with bondage of the law, as if there ought to be among Christians, in order to merit justification, a service like the Levitical, the arrangement of which God has committed to the Apostles and bishops. For thus some of them write; and the Pontiffs in some measure seem to be misled by the example of the law of Moses. Hence are such burdens, as that they make it mortal sin, even without offence to others, to do manual labor on holydays, to omit the Canonical Hours, that certain foods defile the conscience, that fastings are works which appease God, that sin in a reserved case cannot be forgiven but by the authority of him who reserved it; whereas the Canons themselves speak only of the reserving of the ecclesiastical penalty, and not of the reserving of the guilt.

Whence have the bishops the right to lay these traditions upon the Church for the ensnaring of consciences, when Peter [Acts 15. 10] forbids to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, and Paul says [2 Cor. 13. 10] that the power given him was to edification, not to destruction? Why, therefore, do they increase sins by these traditions?

But there are clear testimonies which prohibit the making of such traditions, as though they merited grace or were necessary to salvation. Paul says [Col. 2. 16]: "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days"; [v. 20, 23]: "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (touch not; taste not; handle not, which all are to perish with the using); after the commandments and doctrines of men? which things have indeed a show of wisdom." Also in Tit. [1. 14] he openly forbids traditions: "Not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men that turn from the truth." And Christ [Matt. 15. 14] says of those who require traditions: "Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind"; and he rebukes such services [v. 13]: "Every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be plucked up."

If bishops have the right to burden churches with infinite traditions, and to ensnare consciences, why does Scripture so often prohibit to make and to listen to traditions? Why does it call them "doctrines of devils"? [1 Tim. 4. 1]. Did the Holy Ghost in vain forewarn of these things?

Since, therefore, ordinances instituted as things necessary, or with an opinion of meriting grace, are contrary to the Gospel, it follows that it is not lawful for any bishop to institute or exact such services. For it is necessary that the doctrine of Christian liberty be preserved in the churches, namely, that the bondage of the Law is not necessary to justification, as it is written in the Epistle to the Galatians [5. 1]: "Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." It is necessary that the chief article of the Gospel be preserved, to wit, that we obtain grace freely by faith in Christ, and not for certain observances or acts of worship devised by men.

What, then, are we to think of the Sunday and like rites in the house of God? To this we answer, that it is lawful for bishops or pastors to make ordinances that things be done orderly in the Church, not that thereby we should merit grace or make satisfaction for sins, or that consciences be bound to judge them necessary services, and to think that it is a sin to break them without offence to others. So Paul ordains [1 Cor. 11. 5], that women should cover their heads in the congregation [1 Cor. 14. 30], that interpreters of Scripture be heard in order in the church, etc.

It is proper that the churches should keep such ordinances for the sake of charity and tranquillity, so far that one do not offend another, that all things be done in the churches in order, and without confusion; but so that consciences be not burdened to think that they be necessary to salvation, or to judge that they sin when they break them without offence to others; as no one will say that a woman sins who goes out in public with her head uncovered, provided only that no offence be given.

Of this kind is the observance of the Lord's Day, Easter, Pentecost, and like holydays and rites. For those who judge that, by the authority of the Church, the observance of the Lord's Day instead of the Sabbath Day was ordained as a thing necessary, do greatly err. Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath Day; for it teaches that, since the Gospel has been revealed, all the ceremonies of Moses can be omitted. And yet, because it was necessary to appoint a certain day, that the people might know when they ought to come together, it appears that the Church [the Apostles] designated the Lord's Day for this purpose; and this day seems to have been chosen all the more for this additional reason, that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and might know that the keeping neither of the Sabbath, nor of any other day, is necessary.

There are monstrous disputations concerning the changing of the law, the ceremonies of the new law, the changing of the Sabbath Day, which all have sprung from the false belief that there must needs be in the Church a service like to the Levitical, and that Christ had given commission to the Apostles and bishops to devise new ceremonies as necessary to salvation. These errors crept into the Church when the righteousness of faith was not clearly enough taught. Some dispute that the keeping of the Lord's Day is not indeed of divine right; but in a manner so. They prescribe concerning holy-days, how far it is lawful to work. What else are such disputations but snares of consciences? For although they endeavor to modify the traditions, yet the equity can never be perceived as long as the opinion remains that they are necessary, which must needs remain where the righteousness of faith and Christian liberty are disregarded.

The Apostles commanded to abstain from blood. Who doth now observe it? And yet they that do it, sin not; for not even the Apostles themselves wanted to burden consciences with such bondage; but they forbade it for a time, to avoid offence. For, in any decree, we must perpetually consider what is the aim of the Gospel. Scarcely any Canons are kept with exactness, and, from day to day, many go out of use even with those who are the most zealous advocates of traditions. Neither can due regard be paid to consciences unless this equity be observed, that we know that the Canons are kept without holding them to be necessary, and that no harm is done consciences, even though traditions go out of use.

But the bishops might easily retain the lawful obedience of the people, if they would not insist upon the observance of such traditions as cannot be kept with a good conscience. Now they command celibacy; they admit none, unless they swear that they will not teach the pure doctrine of the Gospel. The churches do not ask that the bishops should restore concord at the expense of their honor; which, nevertheless, it would be proper for good pastors to do. They ask only that they would release unjust burdens which are new and have been received contrary to the custom of the Church Catholic. It may be that there were plausible reasons for some of these ordinances; and yet they are not adapted to later times. It is also evident that some were adopted through erroneous conceptions. Therefore, it would be befitting the clemency of the Pontiffs to mitigate them now; because such a modification does not shake the unity of the Church. For many human traditions have been changed in process of time, as the Canons themselves show. But if it be impossible to obtain a mitigation of such observances as cannot be kept without sin, we are bound to follow the Apostolic rule [Acts 5. 29], which commands us to obey God rather than men. Peter [1 Pet. 5. 3] forbids bishops to be lords, and to rule over the churches. Now it is not our design to wrest the government from the bishops, but this one thing is asked, namely, that they allow the Gospel to be purely taught, and that they relax some few observances which cannot be kept without sin. But if they make no concession, it is for them to see how they shall give account to God for having, by their obstinacy, caused a schism.

# Conclusion

These are the Chief Articles which seem to be in controversy. For although we might have spoken of more Abuses, yet to avoid undue length, we have set forth the chief points, from which the rest may be readily judged. There have been great complaints concerning indulgences, pilgrimages, and the abuses of excommunications. The parishes have been vexed in many ways by the dealers in indulgences. There were endless contentions between the pastors and the monks concerning the parochial rites, confessions, burials, sermons on extraordinary occasions, and innumerable other things. Things of this sort we have passed over, so that the chief points in this matter, having been briefly set forth, might be the most readily understood. Nor has anything been here said or adduced to the reproach of any one. Only those things have been recounted, whereof we thought that it was necessary to speak, so that it might be understood that, in doctrine and ceremonies, nothing has been received on our part, against Scripture or the Church Catholic, since it is manifest that we have taken most diligent care that no new and ungodly doctrine should creep into our churches.

The above articles we desire to present in accordance with the edict of Your Imperial Majesty, so that our Confession should therein be exhibited, and a summary of the doctrine of our teachers might be discerned. If anything further be desired, we are ready, God willing, to present ampler information according to the Scriptures.

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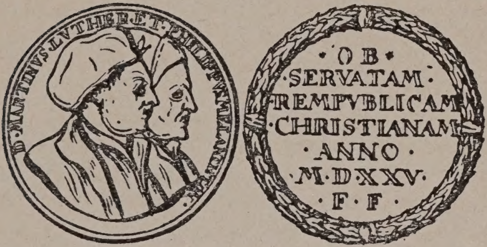
GEORGE, Margrave of Brandenburg.
ERNEST, Duke of Lüneburg.
PHILIP, Landgrave of Hesse.
JOHN FREDERICK, Duke of Saxony.
FRANCIS, Duke of Lüneburg.
WOLFGANG, Prince of Anhalt.
SENATE and MAGISTRACY of Nuremburg.
SENATE of Reutlingen.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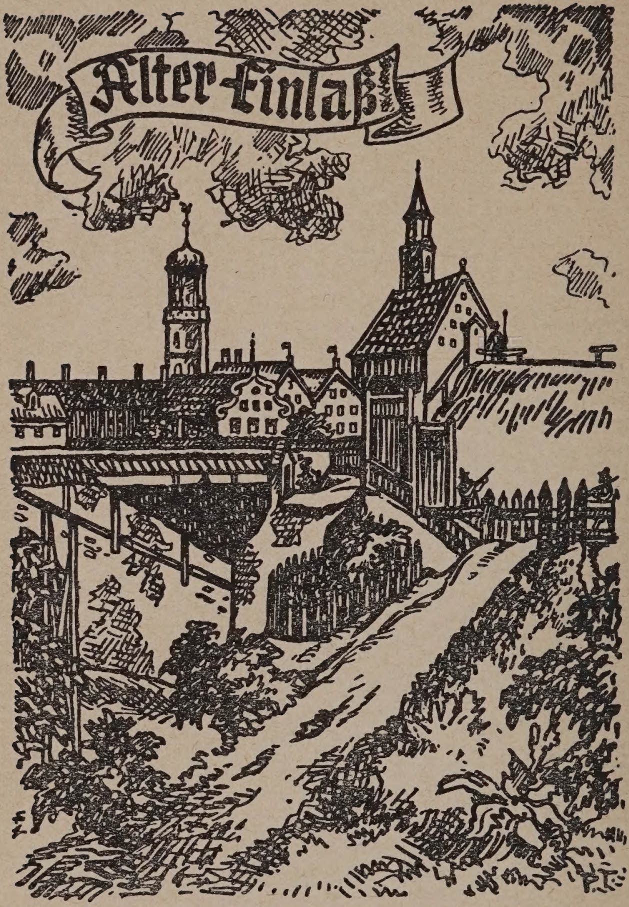
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